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## THE BALANCE OF NATURE.

#### By FRED M. WHITE.



HE tragic circumstances
in which Professor
Egerton Street disappeared from London
and the world of
science, of which he
was such a distinguished ornament, are
not generally known
to the public. Most

people are under the impression that the celipse followed as a natural consequence on the sudden death of Mrs. Street, but a few people knew that the tragedy was precipitated by the professor himself. He was supposed to have injected a certain serum—previously tried upon his own person—and the death of

the lady was due to septic poisoning.

Be that as it may, the circumstances never became public property. Most people looked upon the whole thing as an accident. Anyway, Street disappeared from University College Hospital, and his place knew him no more. He was supposed to be pursuing a series of studies in West Africa with the view to stamping out of malarial fever, but that, after all, was only a rumour. Street had been a rather dour kind of enthusiast, very secretive, and possessing practically no friends. Basil Warburton, the entomologist, had seen him once at Liverpool Street Station with a variety of cases that gave him the air of a travelling naturalist. The two savants had exchanged a few words, but Street had not been communicative. He looked lean and brown and hollow-eyed; he gave just a hint of certain new discoveries. He wanted to know if Warburton had heard anything of a certain new red spider-locally called the "Red Speck"—an account of which had filtered home from Madagascar. happened, Warburton had not only heard of the spider, but he actually possessed a few live specimens. He says that Street's face lighted up in the most extraordinary manner on hearing this.

"You will be doing me—you will be doing the world in general an inestimable service if you will come down to my place at Crawley and bring a 'Red Speck' or two with you. Warburton, I am on the eve of realising a most stupendous discovery. If my deductions are correct, malarial fever is at an end. Those fellows are quite correct—the mosquito and kindred insects are at the bottom of the mischief. I've been digging at the remedy for two years, and I've touched bottom. It would be an insult to your intelligence to ask you if you have heard of insect grafting."

Warburton replied that he had experimented in that direction himself. Articles on the subject had appeared in several of the leading domestic magazines. The thing was a little flashy and meretricious, and no good was likely to result from it. Warburton proceeded to speak of a hybrid dragon-fly he had grafted, but the larvæ had perished, probably had not fructified. Street's eyes

gleamed.

"I've conquered that," he whispered.

"I've reached the breeding stage of the hybrid. The thing is not ripe for the public gaze yet, but I'll show it to you. Come down on Friday and spend a week-end at Crawley with me, and bring your red spiders

along."

The offer was too tempting to be refused. Besides, Street was no pauper genius, but a well-to-do man in a position to carry out his experiments regardless of outlay. Warburton found the house pleasantly situated, the long ranges of glass had been stripped of vine and fern and flower, and given over entirely to the breeding of insects. It was rather a chilly March day, with fitful bursts of warm sunshine, so that Warburton found the glass-houses unpleasantly warm ever and again.

Street had certainly mastered his subject.

He seemed to have every kind of insect in his greenhouses. In one warm corner, behind a series of thin muslin cloths, a cloud of gauzy little creatures seemed to sing and

buzz in the still air.

"Mosquitoes?" Warburton suggested.

"Well, they could do very little harm at this time of the year if they escaped. But where did they come from? I could localise every mosquito known to science, but I never saw any that size before."

"I bred them myself," Street proceeded

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to explain. "The original stock was grafted. Watch, and you will see that the wings are different. There is a dash of the tsetse fly in those fellows. I've had an arm as thick as your thigh from a bite of theirs. What do you think of them?"

Street led the way into another compartment of the greenhouse. The heat was unpleasant; the floor was of sand with fragments of volcanic rock scattered here and there. With the aid of a stick, Street stirred up the stones, and immediately a colony of tarantulas straddled over the sandy floor.

"Nothing wonderful about them," the professor remarked. "But you will see presently why I need them. Roughly speaking, my idea is to kill malaria by a war of extermination. Devise or breed some insect that will prey on the mosquito et hac. Of course, you will argue that the remedy is as bad as the disease. That we shall see. What I want to get hold of by grafting is a slow-breeding insect that will be easy to grapple with when he has done his work. But he is to be a ferocious, poisonous fellow, and to a certain extent a clean feeder. mean he need not be wholly carnivorous. Now suppose we take the Mexican hornet, which is one of the most dangerous of his tribe. Then we want a little of the tenacious ferocity of the spider, and here the tarantula comes in. My ideal warrior must be strong of flight and quick on the wing, and here enters the dragon-fly. This element gives the slow breed-for dragon-flies only come to maturity at the end of three years. Does this sound very weird to you?"

"No," Warburton said thoughtfully. 
"Nothing sounds extravagant to the scientific mind. Yours is going to be by way of a water insect as well. Still, even if you have succeeded in producing fruitful hybrids, the ideal insect is the work of a lifetime."

"It is the work of exactly three years," Street said quietly. "The problem is solved, and the warm bursts of sunshine the last few days have done it. I have never mentioned the matter to a soul before, but I am going to let you into my confidence. The third generation, the perfected thing, has hatched out in a glory that was beyond all my dreams. Come and see."

Street led the way to the far end of the greenhouse, where a part of the dome roof had been removed. The heat was tempered by the outer air, yet it stood well up to 80 degrees. In one corner was a large gauze-wire cage, not unlike a huge meat-safe, and hanging

from the far wall were a series of soft-looking balls that closely resembled the nest of the mason wasp, though they were on a much larger scale. The sides of the blotting-paper structures were honeycombed like a sandbank where a colony of martins had built their nests. There was no sound of life until the little terrier hanging on Street's heels snapped at a fly and struck the wire gauze with his paws. Then the unseen colony set up a short, pinging hum, something like the screams of a flight of rifle bullets. From a shelf behind him Street took a little brown mouse from its cage. Swiftly he lifted the door of the exaggerated meat-safe and deposited the mouse inside.

A moment later and an insect darted from one of the honeycombs. The darting beat of its red wings hummed in the silence of the greenhouse like a hawk. Warburton was loud in his admiration—he had never seen anything like it before.

The creature was some nine inches from tip to tip of those wonderful translucent amber and purple wings. They trembled and flashed like jewels in the light. The body of the insect was some five inches, marked like a hornet for half the distance, the tail being covered with fine, down-like feathers, and tinted from bright red to brilliant peacock blue. The eyes were of deep green, the long legs were curved as the talons of a hawk. Warburton's admiration was absolutely justified and sincere. He had never seen anything like it before. It was so beautiful and yet so repulsive, so soft and noiseless, yet so tigerishly suggestive.

"Your hybrid is perfect, if, as you say, this is the third generation. Born here from the parent stock? Then there is no limit to the monsters of scientific creation. Is—is he

dangerous?"

By way of reply, Street pointed to the mouse huddled up on the bottom of the cage. The little animal seemed to be half dead with fear. The big hawk poised over him, swooped delicately, and his curved beak seemed to meet for an instant in the fur of the tiny rodent's shoulder. It was all in the twinkling of an eye, the brilliant fly was poising again, but the mouse was dead . . . Hardened scientist as he was, Warburton could not repress a shudder.

"They're hungry," Street said in his level voice. "What do they eat? Insects mostly. They are particularly fond of mosquitoes. Those fellows are going to exterminate them. They are only a means



to an end. But they will eat honey and small grain and fruit. Mind you, there is a crumpled rose-leaf in every couch, and the poisonous quality of those fellows is a little beyond my expectation. I suppose it is the mixture of the acid poisons of the tarantula and Mexican hornet in their blood. Would their bite be fatal to man? Yes, it would.

There are over ten thousand of those fellows in that collection of nests, though you would not think it. When I have succeeded in reducing their poisonous qualities, I shall export them to the mosquito swamps, and I'm much mistaken if they don't root out the mosquito and their tribe pretty quickly. Fancy that little beast getting loose in

England at this time of year! Fancy a full nest of them in any hedgerow in the autumn!"

Warburton did not fancy it, and shuddered again. But the scientist was uppermost at the time.

"I should like to have a look at that mouse," he said. "I should like to know precisely the qualities and quantities of the poison that killed him. I'll take the body to Longstaff, and let him make an analysis, if you like. I fancy it would be worth while."

The idea struck Street as a good one. Very carefully he lifted the door of the cage and reached for the body of the mouse. But the little terrier was before him. dog rushed in, banging furiously against the side of the cage. Street rose, unthinkingly, in his desire to recover the dog, so that the cage rocked and reeled, and with a scream as of a thousand flying bullets, the great quivering insects came pelting from the nests. How it all happened nobody knew. Warburton could never tell, but an instant later the cage was overturned, and the dome of the glasshouse was alive with a swarm of some thousands of the great insects. They rose higher and higher, darting and weaving in and out like a lovely pattern of perfect colouring. The humming scream of their anger was almost majestic. Faint and sick, Street was bending to and fro, holding his arm as if in some deadly pain.

"Quick!" he gasped. "I'm done for!
One of them got me through the wrist. I
had more or less been prepared for something
of this kind. Look at the last few pages of

Volume VI. of-"

Street collapsed on the floor, his sentence unfinished. Whether he was dead or alive Warburton did not know—he did not even seem to care. He was too fascinated to be frightened—he could not keep his eyes off that tangled, angry mass of lovely colour up in the dome. Death and destruction and hideous nightmare of terror lurked there. Then one of the amazing creatures darted through the dome light and poised in the air, the great purple and gold and amber cloud followed, and shone in the open air like some glorious rainbow of hues. And Street lay there dead and stark at the feet of his colleague.

Warburton crept outside, feeling sick and faint and shaky from the play of his imagination. Here was a deadly peril, such a peril as was sure to follow sooner or later upon the attempt to destroy the balance of nature. If a thousand or so of man-eating tigers had

been let loose in Sussex, the effect would have been less deadly and more paralysing than the escape of those beautiful insects. They were darting and playing now like a nimbus about the crown of a group of elm trees. Warburton could hear the pinging scream of their wings. They looked unutterably beautiful in the brilliant burst of sunshine, a thing of beauty terribly fascinating. But if they began to attack human life!

It would be impossible to fight the winged queens of the air. They could go like the wind whither they listed, bringing death and destruction everywhere. They were built for rapid flight—they might hold London captive one night and strike terror into

Birmingham the next.

But Warburton had to pull himself together, he had to think of Street. The professor was dead enough, there were four or five livid red and white spots on his neck, as if the flesh had been cruelly gripped by a pair of pincers. The victim lay there quite peacefully, with a shadowy smile on his face.

Death must have come very swiftly.

With the aid of a gardener, Warburton conveyed the body to the house. It was necessary to go through the formula of sending for a doctor, and that was a matter of time. Warburton would fetch his own man from town. This was outside the ken of the general practitioner. If only the trains had fitted in a little less awkwardly! Was there such a thing as a cycle about the house? The professor's motor-cycle was in its accustomed shed. Warburton grasped at the idea of action. He could ride to town on that. Anything to be doing something. Probably he would be back again before the local man arrived. Warburton sped along by way of Redhill and Reigate in the direction of London. It was borne in upon him presently that the roads were strangely deserted for the time of day. Nothing could be seen or heard for a long time, till the crest of a rise in the road disclosed a motor standing outside a blacksmith's shop. Warburton could hear the car humming as he raced along.

Two men coated in leather and hideously masked, racing men evidently, stood just inside the door. There was an air of excitement about them that Warburton did not fail to notice. One of the grotesque figures hailed him. From the Rembrandt shadows of the smithy a pair of hobnailed boots protruded, as if the rest of the owner had

fallen there, overcome with beer.
"He's dead," one of the motor men jerked



"He dragged the dead smith to the light."

out. "Pulled up here just now for a spanner, and found him lying like that. Have you seen anything of them?"

Warburton guessed what was meant. On the hood of the car he could discern a squashed yellow and red body or two, then caught in the sunshine the flutter of gauzy

amber wings.

"Delirium tremens, gone mad," the other man said shakily. "What do you say to the car being attacked by a million of insects as big as a partridge and coloured like a poet's dream? Loveliest sight I have ever seen—at first. I made a grab at one, and he bit through my glove as if it had been a rose-leaf. Then the whole blooming lot made for us—quite a million of 'em. Frightened? Well, I should say so. But we were in armour, so to speak, and managed to beat

them off. Got a couple of beautiful specimens, too, as dead as Queen Anne. And then we find the blacksmith dead, too. Perhaps they went for him."

Warburton fought down the physical sickness that seemed to hold him in a grip. As he dragged the dead smith to the light, he did not fail to notice the pincer-like mark on the flesh of the swarthy neck. One of the squashed hybrids was tightly grasped in his hand. Warburton asked feebly which way the swarm had gone. The motor driver pathetically requested to be given an easier one. Despite his forced hilarity, he was shaking like a leaf. He affirmed that he wanted London badly.

"And so do I," Warburton said between his teeth. "As it happens, I can tell you all about the business. Find the spanner and make your repairs. It sounds inhuman, but we must let that poor fellow lie there for the present. Get a move on you. I'll come along."

But the news had reached London first, the whole grotesque, maddening tragedy was being yelled by the newsboys along the Embankment. There was a telegram at his rooms waiting for Warburton from Crawley, saving that the inquest on Street would not be for a day or two, contrary to precedent. Before eight o'clock, the family of the unhappy smith had been interviewed; there was a column from an eye-witness, who had watched the attack on Mr. Cyrus A. Blyder's motor. A taxidermist in Holborn had a specimen of the deadly hybrid in his window, and the police were busy at the spot. Warburton himself was given over to the interviewers, who literally tore him to pieces. He had not meant to say anything, but he did not know the manners of the class. As a matter of fact, he told everything-and a great deal more.

The odd millions who had gone to bed overnight in ignorance of the new terror had it served up piping hot for breakfast next morning. A few more odd tragedies had dribbled in during the small hours. A rabbit-poacher at Esher had blundered into the clutch of a swarm sleeping on an elder bush, and his body, terribly distorted, had been found by a half-imbecile colleague in crime. Such is the effect produced on the nation by a cheap, pessimistic Press that thousands of people absented themselves from work during the day. But as the hours crept on, courage returned till midday, when the news spread like wildfire that a number of insects had been seen in a confectioner's shop in Regent Street. Curiosity overcame fear for the moment, and a rush was made westward. Surely enough, the news was true. Half-a-dozen pretty shop-assistants stood pale and frightened on the pavement, inside the shop something was humming and pinging and darting like a beautiful humming-bird poised over a vase of flowers. Presently something boomed overhead like the zipping song of many telegraph-wires in a gale of wind, and, as if by magic, the smart confectioner's shop was a veritable aviary of the beautiful hybrids. A thoughtless 'bus-driver made a slash at a darting insect with his whip, and instantly the gorgeous thing hummed at him and struck him in the throat.

With a scream of fear and pain, the man dropped from his box and lay writhing in

the road. It was a crisp, clear day, but the unhappy driver was bathed in perspiration. He seemed to be frantic, half mad with the pain that he was suffering. He tore wildly at his collar, his lips were dripping with foam. But he did not die, as the professor and the smith had done, though the maddening pain was likely to produce complete physical exhaustion.

"He can't endure agony like that much longer," someone said, pushing his way through the crowd. "I'm a doctor. Bring him along to the nearest chemist's shop. This is a case for the hypodermic syringe and ether. It may be the means of saving

the poor fellow's life."

There was no occasion to ask the crowd to stand aside. Fear had overcome curiosity, and the mob had melted into the air. The loot of the confectioner's shop was pretty well done by this time, the darkening air was humming again with the darting hybrids. Like wasps and bees, and others of their tribe, they might have been expected to seek some dark corner for shelter and rest, but possibly the glare of the electric lights had excited them. Never, perhaps, had the streets of the West End been so deserted as they were now. London had scuttled home like a colony of frightened rabbits directly darkness had set in; a creeping policeman or two along the Embankment discovered here and there a solitary hybrid banging his beautiful head against the arc lights, the buzzing of its wings making a weird sound.

All the same, the legislators of the country could not stand still merely because a brilliant and eccentric scientist had invented a new hybrid by the process of insect grafting. Most patriotic members of Parliament walked to their duties, for coachmen generally had flatly refused to turn out in the dark. The theatres might have closed their doors, for all the business they were doing; the music-Some genius had halls were deserted. suggested the arming of the police in Parliament Street with rackets, and this had been done. There had been up to ten o'clock a total bag of sixty hybrids. And there were still some ten thousand of them at large in London.

About ten o'clock the serenity of the House of Commons was marred by sounds of distress proceeding from the direction of the kitchen. A flying squadron of the hybrids had attacked the provisions there, and had been driven off by the pungent smoke of burnt brown paper. They came darting and hawking along the corridor into the Chamber itself, poising high

overhead like a flight of beautiful birds. The hum of their wings spoke of anger. An honourable member paused in his speech, and hastily made a truncheon of the newspaper from which he was quoting. Two of the gleaming terrors came in angry conflict, and dropped flopping and struggling on the table

in front of the Speaker.

Dignity could stand it no longer. There was a mad rush from the Chamber. Outside, a big, sweating policeman was vigorously fighting off one of the foe with his racket. Professor Clements, member for St. Peter's, turned the collar of his coat up and called for a hansom. But no hansom was to be seen, so the savant had to make his way to Warburton's lodgings on foot. Warburton, tired and fagged, had just returned from Crawley. He had been down to the inquest on Street, he explained. Of course, the inquiry was adjourned, as it was likely to be many times yet.

"That's what I came to see you about," Clements said. "It is pretty fortunate that there is one man who can tell me the source of this diabolical invasion. What beautiful, satanic things they are ! And yet the whole idea is so disgustingly horrible. Fancy one of those things dropping on your face when you are asleep! The mere idea fills me with terror. Surely, Street must have been mad

when he was inspired by this thing."

"I don't think so," Warburton said thoughtfully. "The root idea was logical enough—a way of exterminating the malarial insect with a slow-growing hybrid that man would successfully combat afterwards. I have no doubt that Street foresaw some such danger, and had schemed a way of meeting it. But, unfortunately, he had not time nor

opportunity of telling me."

"Then you think that there is some way out of the mess?" Clements said. they were wild beasts, or anything of that kind, if they were merely malarial germs that we could fight with recognised weapons! But with those wonderfully flighted insects we are quite powerless. In eight-and-forty hours they will spread all over the kingdom. Having some of the habits of the wasp, they will break up into colonies and build nests. And what human agency have we to fight those nests? The loathsome, lovely creatures may take it into their heads to make an enemy of man. Good Heavens! the mere suggestion throws me into a cold perspiration."

" I dare say we shall find some way," " And no Warburton began feebly.

doubt-"

"Yes, but the horror of it! You think

that Street-

"My dear fellow, Street was no blind enthusiast, who let his heart get the better of his head."

" Have you thought of looking amongst his papers and notes for anything likely to-"

Warburton jumped to his feet with a cry. A sudden light had broken in upon him.

"What a dolt I am!" he exclaimed. "I never thought of that. Why, as soon as the accident happened, Street turned to me and said something. What did he say? Ah, yes. 'Look at the last few pages of Volume VI. of—' alluding to his diary, no doubt. Come along, Clements."

"Where are you going at this time of the

night?" Clements asked.

"Crawley," Warburton cried. "To inspect Volume VI. of poor Street's diary right away. We must get there at once, if we have to take

a special train."

As it turned out, the special train to Crawley was necessary. It was no time for nice ceremonies, and Warburton ordered it without delay. An anxious superintendent stated that the enterprise would cost the

voyagers nothing.

"Our directors ought to be glad to place half of our stock at the disposal of you gentlemen," he said. "Anything so long as you are trying to put an end to the state of terror. Why, since early this afternoon our main line of trains have been positively empty. Nobody is coming to London at present. A few insects holding up a big city like this! Seems almost incredible, doesn't it?"

It did, but there it was. Still, there was consolation in the idea that these two scientists were doing something as the special flew on into the darkness. There was a momentary stoppage at Three Bridges owing to a mineral train on the track; there was an unusual bustle going on in the small station, considering the time of night. Warburton leant eagerly out of the carriage window. A couple of porters were busily engaged in pouring a stream of water from a hydrant into one of the waiting-rooms.

"We've got three of those beastly flies in there," the stationmaster explained. "We're trying to drown them out. There's a nice

crisp touch in the air to-night."

Warburton started as a sudden idea came to him, but he said nothing to his companion. They were very silent until Street's house was reached. The place was absolutely deserted, for the servants had vanished. Nobody

could be persuaded to face the hidden dangers of the house. Who could tell what dreadful monster would rise next? Street's body had been conveyed to an adjacent hotel, his own place was dark and desolate. Warburton settled the matter by breaking a window and entering the house that way. He fumbled about until he touched the electric switch, and presently the whole place was flooded with light. Street had had a full installation even into the greenhouses.

There were cases and cages all over the house. Even in what was the drawing-room Warburton and his companion could see those great safe-kind of arrangements from which the deadly hybrids had escaped. Clements idly rattled one with a stick, and instantly the whole structure hummed like a hive of angry bees. Quaint things like little flying lizards darted against the bars.

"This is as bad as delirium tremens," Clements murmured. "Now, what are those abortions, for instance? Are they intended to be for some good purpose, or are they as deadly dangerous as the hybrids? We dare not pry too far, because we don't know. And the only man who does know is dead. To clear the place and render it safe—why, good gracious! there may be thousands of eggs and larvæ hatching at this house, not necessarily dangerous in their present condition, but——"

"I've found a way to deal with them," Warburton said hoarsely. "It's a desperate, not to say a drastic, remedy, but we shall have the approval of the State. Let us get this creepy business over as soon as possible, Clements. Come to the library and find the diaries. I am hoping that we may discover

the balm of Gilead there."

The amateur housebreakers were only concerned with the sixth volume of Street's diaries. There was a mass of figures and calculations there that conveyed nothing to anybody but the writer, but towards the end of the paper-covered volume came something like a concise account of the apotheosis of the hybrids. At some length the origin of their being was set out, and then the measures by which they were to be successfully combated when their work was done.

"By Jove! the thing is fairly simple," Warburton cried. "I can see nothing here that speaks of an antidote to the bite of the creature. But they can be rendered harmless by the application of ammonia and eucalyptus to the skin—in fact, Street says that they will fly in terror before it. I should

like to see the experiment tried. Come to

the laboratory."

The necessary ingredients were found and mixed in the proportions set out, and then were rubbed by each man on his hands and face and neck. It was just possible that a close search of the greenhouses would discover another case of the beautiful hybrids. There were many cages picked out by the flare of the electric light, and many strange colonies of insects disturbed, before Warburton's eyes lighted on one of the zinc safes with a couple of the peculiar blotting-paper nests inside. A vigorous shaking filled the cage with a tangled, angry knot of dazzling colour. The screams of vibrating wings hummed in the air. Beating down the terror that possessed him, Warburton thrust his hand into the small door at the top of the cage. The insects darted back from him, one hit the top of the cage and fell back upon his sweating, pungent palm. It was all he could do to keep from screaming. It was hard to have full faith in the dead man's remedy.

But nothing happened. The great insect lay on the sticky palm, its wings palpitating gently. The long, beautifully marked body was bent backwards, then the wings were absolutely stilled. Warburton pulled his hand from the cage and dropped the hybrid

on the floor.

"Dead," he said calmly. He was outwardly cool enough, though his lip was torn where the teeth had met it. "Dead as a door-nail. Paralysed by the odour given off from the compound, I expect. Clements, we've got to see this thing through now. You keep those diabolical flies stirred up to a pretty passion whilst I get a spray. We'll

try it on the whole lot."

Clements nodded his approval of the suggestion. With a stick he kept the hive in a state of commotion. The wings of the creatures screamed angrily, the whole space was a dazzling flash of kaleidoscopic colour. It was very repulsive, and yet strangely, weirdly beautiful. Warburton came back presently with a fully charged bottle of spray in his hand. At a distance of a yard he proceeded to discharge the fine spray into the cage. The effect was like magic, the scream of those opalescent wings ceased, on the instant a cloud of insects sank to the bottom of the cage and lay there, a tangled heap of dead creatures. Warburton broke out into extravagant joy.

"Settled the whole business," he said.

"In the cause of science, mind you, it is a pity. In the interests of humanity we should



have preserved some of those creatures. But the country wouldn't stand it—the terror is too great. Still, if we can show the people

quickly there is a sure and certain way out of the danger, whv——"
"Better not," Clements said thoughtfully.

"No good ever came yet, and no good ever will come, by interfering with the balance of Nature. The demon that scotches the demon is always the worst demon of the lot. The

winged terror has been bad enough, especially now that the master hand controlling it is no more. Street was thorough in his methods, he was a fanatic in the cause of science. And Heavenonly knows what new horrors are concealed in

ing-cages, and
the larvæ we
found in those
novel incubators in the
boiler-house.
Street knows,
and he is
dead. If we
destroy everything——"

those breed-

"We are going to,"
Warburton said grimly.
"Let's go and find a bed somewhere—my nerves are pretty steady, but I would not sleep in this house for a V.C. Come along."

Warburton got through to London on the

telephone early the next day, and the result of his interview with the Board of Agriculture and Spring Gardens was quite satisfactory. He would be back in town as early as possible, he said. But, meanwhile, there was much to be done. He was going to take the law into his own hands. A load or two of straw and a few gallons of paraffin were all that Warburton needed. Half an hour later,



"Beating down the terror that possessed him, Warburton thrust his hand into the small door at the top of the cage."

and Street's late residence, including his long stretch of glass, was a mass of calcined ruins. What secrets those grey ashes held would never be known....

It was late in the afternoon before Warburton and Clements reached London. There were more people

in the streets than there had been yesterday, for the secret of the cure had been proclaimed, and some of the bolder spirits were venturing out again. The air reeked with the smell of mingled eucalyptus and ammonia. One of the evening papers had an account of the manner in which a County Council labourer covered with the mixture had tackled a score

of the hybrids in a Mayfair house, and had overcome them with the greatest case.

But there were nearly ten thousand of the insects to be accounted for, and people generally had not forgotten the horrors of the past few hours. A large concourse of interested spectators had gathered in the operating-theatre of the Metropolitan Hospital to see Warburton deal with a few of the hybrids taken in the butterfly nets for the special occasion. Half an hour later, an eager throng of men were scouring London, prepared to deal with the evil, when met. The run on ammonia and eucalyptus severely taxed the resources of the chemists' shops. Warburton looked thoughtfully contented as he walked to his rooms. He saw that the sky was clear, and that the sun was going down like a red ball in the west.

"The elements are coming to our assistance," he said. "If this weather goes on for eight-and-forty hours longer, the situation is absolutely saved. I'm sending a letter to the Central Press and Press Association to-night, asking them to see that it appears in every morning and evening paper in England to-

morrow. See you later.'

It was exactly how Warburton had hoped and asked for. His letter called attention to the fact that a severe frost seemed imminent, and that it looked likely to last for a day or two. If the frost maintained itself, it would be the duty of every householder to search his premises, and see that they entertained no specimen of the deadly hybrid. they were driven out of doors, the first sharp frost would be fatal to them. They were bred practically from tropical insects, and therefore they could not stand cold. At the same time, it would be only prudent to see that the insects were quite dead, and not merely torpid. It was necessary, also, for everybody who found even one of the hybrids to report the fact to the Board of Agriculture. Not one of them must be left alive. An open window and the faintest touch of

ammonia and eucalyptus would be sufficient to drive the insects into the open air.

At the end of twenty-four hours the figures began to come in. Between London and Redhill over eight thousand five hundred of the insects had been found, either dead or torpid, a great number of them being discovered clinging to the arches of the bridges over the river. The wave of terror rolled back, and London became itself again. To the satisfaction of everybody, the frost continued, so that on the morning of the second day over nine thousand seven hundred and fifty of the lovely hybrids had been accounted for. An odd specimen or two drifted here and there for the next week, and then eight days passed without further result. Beyond the few specimens kept and preserved at South Kensington, none remained.

"I fancy the danger is over," Warburton said to Clements, as they lunched together a few days later at the Athenæum Club. "And

yet it seems a pity, too."

"Great pity," Clements agreed, "It's a thousand pities, too, that Street died in so tragic a manner, for, unless I am greatly mistaken, a great secret perished with him. I would have given much to see the fight between the hybrids and the mosquitoes on the Gold Coast. And yet the situation would not have been without its terrors."

"What do you mean?" Warburton asked.

"Well, those hybrids would have increased in size in that congenial atmosphere. They would have developed habits of their own. And Street, after all, was working on a theory. Fancy a dozen of those hybrids as big as an eagle——"

"Don't!" Warburton shuddered. "The horror was quite bad enough as Street evolved

it."

### WHEN THE LEAVES FALL.

WHEN the leaves fall, they rustle red and gold
Along the paths and lie 'neath sheltering wall.
The summer's story is a tale that's told
When the leaves fall.

Midsummer days have held us in sweet thrall, Midsummer nights wore witcheries manifold; But now white mists hang heavy over all.

I almost wish those leaves had kept their hold,
The trees are looking very bare and tall:
And oh, the sweeping up, fold upon fold!
When the leaves fall.

ELIZABETH B. PIERCY.

## THE O.P.Q. RAYS.

#### By HENRY A. HERING.



NCE upon a time," began the old man,

"I was a Britisher."

"Gosh!" said a
smart young hardware drummer,

"that's a poor be-

ginnin'."

Mr. John Daniels looked at the speaker with marked

disapprobation. "If you can't cotton to my beginnin'," he said, "I don't think my middle'll soot your constituotion, an' I'm certain my end won't. P'r'aps someone else'll oblige."

"Go on, daddy," was the general chorus. "Don't mind Sandy. We'll smother him

nex' time."

Mr. Daniels was mollified. He rolled a cigarette with the dexterity that comes of much practice, lit it with calm deliberation,

and then resumed -

"As I war a-sayin' when that darned hayseed interrupted, one time I war a Britisher.
Seems sorter unnatural now, but at the time
I rather fancied it. The only people I knew
were British, barrin' Uncle Mick, an' he were
Irish; the only songs I knew were British—
'Rule, Britannia!' an' 'We won't go Home
till Mornin'!'—an' the only langwidge I spoke
was British. I couldn't speak Amurrican
before I made the acquaintance of the
O.P.Q. Rays."

"What's the O.P.Q. Rays, Mr. Daniels?"

asked an intelligent inquirer.

"This hyer yarn's full of 'em," said the narrator. "I'm gettin' to 'em as quick as I can, but there's such a blamed lot of interruptin'."

The intelligent inquirer subsided bashfully, and after a dignified pause Mr. Daniels

resumed—

"I lived in Leeds, in Yorkshire, England, when I was a Britisher. I used to write poems for the newspapers for a livin'; but I only had a very thin time of it, although my poetry referred to the best class of dry goods on the market.

"Britishers were lords of creation in those

rails, but they held the record in aristocracy an' solid conceit. They weren't pertic'ler strong at book-learnin', but no one could touch 'em at football an' cricket an' fox-huntin'.

"But someone was always breekin' their

days. They'd lost the lead in pig-iron an'

"But someone was always breakin' their records. You scarcely ever opened a paper without readin' that a Yankee or a German had left 'em miles behind in somethin'. Still the Britishers were quite cheerful about it. You see, they held so many records. A big geologer made a list of 'em at the end of the nineteenth century, when I was a lad, an' even then we led the field in 972 lines. I've forgotten most of 'em, but I remember they included cavalry uniforms, the House of Lords, marmalade, an' peggy-tubs. So seated on 972 pinnacles, the British nation could afford to start the new century with the bands playin' 'Cock-a-Doodle-Doo!' with encore verses.

"Well, it seemed that this royal geologer, instead of doin' a service to his country by makin' out his stupenjous list, had just turned the few level heads that were left in the land, for the British made no attempt to add to the 972 pinnacles, an' their neighbours spent most of their time in subtractin' from them. By 1920 the same geologer discovered that the British had lost 560 leads, an' now held only 412; an' the nex' day's paper said that Sprankenstein's Aut'matic Peggies could mend the wristbands an' buttonholes, an' wash, starch, iron, an' deliver shirts, within fifteen minutes of receipt-which meant another record lost for the United Kingdom. The Times had a leadin' article on peggytubs, an' Consols dropped five p'ints. An' a fortnight after that came the O.P.Q. Rays, an' the end.

"There was a young man managin' the German Umpire just then. I've forgotten his name, but we'll call him Richard for short. He was an emperor, a king, a poet, a scene-painter, an orator, a musician, a soldier, an' a sailor. He'd broken more records than any single emperor since Julius Cæsar, an' he was determined to wind up with breakin' the British Umpire. An' he did it.

"Richard had started trade early in life,

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an' was up to all the tricks of the emperor business. He did the finest line in soldiers, bar none; an' his fleet was always assimilatin'. His grandfather hadn't left him any colonial branches for his store, an' Richard's main object in life was to open some. But most of 'em were held by the United Kingdom, so Richard had to bide his time till the United Kingdom was abstracted, when he reckoned he'd just pop in an' collar colonial branches an' main establishment as well.

"He chose his time well, did Richard. I remember we were all busy decidin' whether football should be included in the modern or the classical side of our schools' curriculums. The Tories said the Romans played football, an' if that was proved, it would have settled the matter; but the Radicals opined that it wasn't football at all that the Romans played, but deck-quoits, an' they maintained that football was discovered in Charles the First's time by the same man who invented bottled beer, which brought

the game well into the modern section. The whole nation was divided on the subject, an' elections were lost an' won on it, an'

heads opened out.

" It was summer-time, so football was off, but cricket was patronised strong by both classicals and moderns. There's no darned antiquity about cricket. It was the 19th of August when the big game of the year-Egypt versus London—took place at Park Avenue, Bradford. The match had been well advertised, an' Britishers came by motor from New Zealand, Africa, an' other Colonies to see it. There was a fair amount of airships as well, an' only an odd dozen or so foundered. People that stayed at home saw the match by wireless telescopy, an' applauded through the absentees' megaphone over the reporters' stand. I remember the committee had to plug the instrument half-way through the game.

"There were over a hundred thousand spectators ranged round the amphitheatre, which was built after the 'riginal at Athens. Cricket was cricket in those days, an' the Prince of Wales an' the Commander-in-Chief in full uniform were with the Lord Lieutenant of the county on the grand-stand, an' behind the spectators were the Army an' swell club tents runnin' with salmon an' champagne jest as at the horse-races. They'd elevated cricket about as high as it could go, an' the captains of first-class counties rode before the youngest sons of marquises in the Lord

Mayor's Show.

"I didn't cotton to cricket myself. only went there that day to see if Egyptians took to battin' as well as they did to pyramids. I don't know who was winnin'. I don't think I ever knew, for my thoughts were runnin' on a poem I was writin' for the agony column of a daily newspaper, an' all the time I was watchin', my brain was strivin' to get the rhymes to fit. But 'twarn't no blamed use with a prince of the House of Pharaoh distractin' me with his swipes, so at three o'clock I slipped away to walk across the moors to Ilkley, an' finish my poem amidst the smell of the heather an' the wild-fowl. It was about somebody's haircurlers, an' I knew that if I gave myself freely up to Nature, I should find the adjectives I wanted. An' I wasn't disappointed. Before I reached Ilkley I'd finished that poem, an' started another on all-wool pants an' vests for a Society print.

"My intention was to have my tea, an' then walk home. There was a full moon due, which would see me well through my

underclothin' sonnet, an' like as not give me a notion ahead. I struck the town at seven o'clock, an' noticed a cluster of folk round a news-shop door. I shouldered my way through them, an' read the poster myself—

# "'GERMAN ARMY LANDED AT HULL. YORK CAPTURED.'

And it wasn't a comic journal, either, but one that spent its time in runnin' England,

Home, an' Beauty on first-class lines.

"'The Germans at Hull. York Captured.' I ain't much of a fighter. I haven't got it in size nor yet in blood, but as I read this the letters seemed to rise outer the poster. Somethin' wanted to burst inside me, an' I'd like to have smashed a big china bowl or an emperor. But as neither of these articles was handy, I jest slipped inside the shop an' fought for a paper. This is what I read—

"Sheffield, 3 p.m. A Midland fireman has jest brought the astoundin' news that German troops landed at Hull at ten this mornin', an' captured the town without the Mayor an' Copporation strikin' a blow in its

defence.

"'At twelve o'clock a regiment of Imperial Sauerkrauts detrained at York, which is now in the possession of the Teutons.

" Where are our soldiers?

- "'Our electric communications have apparently been in the hands of the enemy since daybreak. The last news from London came through at 5 a.m. Since that hour our Marconi instrument has steadily recorded Milton's 'Paradise Lost,' which some humorist is supplyin' gratis to this office. We are now wadin' through the last canto, an' we will report what follows in our next edition. Since five o'clock our wireless telescopic view has remained fixed on the monkey-house of the Zoological Society's Gardens at Regent's Park, an' no notice is taken of our signals for release. The only news of the outside world which we had this morning is the lunch cricket-score, which has come through by carrier-pigeon from Bradford, an' which will be found on page 4.
  - "'The wires have evidently been cut.
    "'An' the Germans hold Yorkshire.'
- "I stood there transmixed. Was I myself or somebody else? Was I stark mad, or dreamin', or what? But there was Ilkley, jest as usual. A wagonette full of happy tipplers returnin' from the country taprooms

passed me. There were the bath-chairs with the old ladies inside, an' the donkeys with the kids on top, jest as you see them on the post-cards. Two pierrots with illuminated faces crossed the road. One was hummin' 'Haughty Hilda Hopkins,' an' I remember he had the music in his hand. The sun was not carin' whether it took me to Timbuctoo or the Scilly Isles. As a matter of fact, it steered straight for my own city.

"There were two other folk in the compartment—a parson an' his wife. I asked 'em what they thought of the German invasion. They hadn't heard of it. The parson

pulled out a temperance paper, an' read it ostentatious under my nose, an' his wife looked reprovin' at me over her tattin'. At Otley two farmers got in. They had heard about the Germans. They had three cows grazin' Hull way, an' they were goin' to fetch 'em off any prospective battlefields.

"The parson put his paper away an' said somethin' about the German invasion bein' the natural consequence of our refusin' to adopt the metric system of calculatin'. It was a new idea to me, an' I wanted to argue it out. We were discussing it when the train drew up outside Holbeck. Snakes! but it was close, though both windows were The parson's wife down. dropped her tattin' an' went to sleep. The parson's tongue stopped in the middle of a big word it was elecutin', au' he began to nod. We looked on, sleepy-like. I wanted to lift the tattin' from the floor, but I couldn't move my legs. It was funny to be like that. Only eight o'clock in the evenin', an' the Germans in Yorkshire, an' all of us droppin' off to sleep! I struggled hard, and then I remembered no more for a bit.

"I awoke shiverin'; we were in Leeds Station. It was four o'clock in the mornin', an' chilly at that. I tried to remember things. Was it all a dream, the Germans an' the railway talk?

But there was the parson, an' his wife, an' the farmers.

"'All out!' shouted a station help in a sort o' muffled voice. We stretched our lim's an' got out, an' there on the platform was a file of blue-vested, white-trousered, brass-bound men in helmets—Germans!



still stuck up in the sky, shinin' hard all the time. And the Germans held Yorkshire!

"With a curse I crumpled up the paper an' hustled into the railway station. The newspaper-stall was besieged. It might have been Derby Day. A train was jest startin'. I felt I must keep movin', an' I jumped in, "I went up to the officer with the Methuselah beard.

"'What's the meanin' of this, captain?'

I asked. 'I've been asleep.'

"He grinned down to his boots. 'Ja, ja, mein Freund,' he said. 'You haf all been to sleep. You are in Leets, but you are in

Tchermany.'

"Before I could condemn his geography I was hustled along. Below the clock was a bigger lot of Sauerkrauts, munchin' their early mornin' sausage. A donnerblitzen lieutenant with spectacles an' drawn sword formed us into single file, an' marched us to the cloak-room window. At the other side of it was another officer, with a couple of Sauerkrauts behind him. Some penmen were writin' at desks.

" ' Name an' address?'

"' John Daniels, 21, Marlin's Terrace, Headingly."

" Occupation ? '

" Poet.

"'Ha!' spurted the officer. 'Dis man is dantcherous. Mark dis, sare, if dere is drouble, de boets vill first be shot. Oonterstant?'

"'Your Emperor is a poet,' I replied, for

I was narked.

"'Vat!' he blazed out. 'You are a temagogue also? Boet and temagogue! See, I note your name,' an' he splodged the register. 'You vill be vatched. You are a lucky man if you come out of dis mess alife. Mark me, neider write nor talk. I vatch you. Take dis.' He handed me a paper. 'It is a bearmit exbirin' in von hour. If you are found in de streets after dat, you are shot. Be off, boet an' temagogue. Bah!'

"Then I found myself in City Square. Blue-tunicked soldiers marched round the statue of Edward the Black Prince. They were h'istin' the German flag over the post-office. I was a stamp-collector, so I made my way across to get some of the new issues. A patrol stopped me. I showed my paper.

"' Hasten up,' said the Sauerkraut, p'intin' to the clock. 'De minutes fly, do not telay.'

"I made a note of that sentence for a poem. It was rather catchin' metre, an' I'd got it into persition before I'd lost sight of the tail of Edward's charger—

"Our sale will close the end of May, The minutes fly, so don't delay.

"Seemed sorter sardonic, composin' poetry in the midst of the enemy; but in warfare the veneer of civilisation is dropped, an' the nat'ral man shows himself. "I walked to Headingly, where I was lodgin'. The streets were empty save for German soldiers an' civilians, like myself, hurryin' home. Every ten lamp-posts I was stopped by an inquisitive patrol. I got inter the way of showin' my permit to every soldier I met, whether he asked for it or not; but there was no gratitude expressed in their replies.

"My permit expired at six. It was after time when I reached my road, five minutes past the hour when I got to No. 21. There was a Sauerkraut bearin' down on me fifty yards away. I flourished my permit at him, stuck it on the top of the gate-palin', and got

inside.

- "I lived in the attic, as is the habit of poets. The downstairs rooms were let to a college coach. He came into the passage when he heard the door open. He said that at one o'clock the day before he was pilotin' a medical student through the campaigns of Julius Cæsar. The student fell asleep as they were crossin' a river; an' right in the middle of the battle of Hastings or Marathon he dozed off again. Nex' time he fell asleep his master j'ined him, an' when they woke in the evenin' a Sauerkraut, armed to the teeth, was standin' over them. They were so astonished that they called him 'Julius' at first.
  - " 'Read dis,' he said, showin' a paper.
- "'In the name of his Imperial Majesty, Richard, Emperor of the Germans on Land and over Sea, King of Prussia, etsettery, etsettery.

"' Your country is in the possession of the

Imperial troops.

"' Your Army is impotent, an'your Govern-

ment is grouse-shootin'.

"'Resistance to the Imperial by-laws an' reg'lations will be punished by instant death.

"'You will keep to your domicile. If you venture into the open without permit,

you will be destroyed.

"'Provision carts will call regularly for orders. In case of incivility or inattention, communicate with the Imperial Central Office, Town Hall, Leeds. Telephone number, 883.

"'(Signed) GENERAL STUFFMACHER, "'Chief of the Staff.'

"Then the Deutscher grinned fiercely an' clattered away.

"'What does it all mean?' asked the college man. 'What's goin' on outside?'

"Alarums, excursions, an' Hohenzollerns!' I replied. 'They've evaded our



Army, captured our cities, an' ended up with insultin' our national literatoor at the Midland Railway cloak-room window.' Then I told all I knew, which was little enough. Leeds, like Hull an' York, had apparently been captured without a blow bein' struck. Where was our Army, our Militia, our Volunteers, our anythin'? Could nothin' be done?

"We looked outer the window. The sentry was starin' at my permit stuck on the gate. There was another pacin' the opposite side of the road. There was the sound of tootlin', an' they turned briskly round as a circus procession appeared at the end of the street. No, it was a squadron of Sauerkraut cavalry, with colours flyin', trumpets flarin', an' kettle-drums beatin', lookin' as if they were takin' a leadin' part in a coronation. Every window was soon filled with gloomy spectators. The dragoons passed, the sentries resumed their beats. People left the windows. We turned to each other. No, nothin' could be done. We might overpower the sentries; but we were not in a persition to receive cavalry. The Germans held Leeds. All we could do was to sit tight till the grouse-shootin' was over, an' in

the meantime file the address of the Sauer-kraut Central Office.

"An hour later there was a ring at the front-door bell. Mrs. Tinker, our land-lady, answered it, but at the sight of two fully rigged Hohenzollern troopers she fled down the cellar steps, callin' to us to save her.

"'What noo outrage is this?' I said sternly to the soldiers, who were now in the

passage.

"They fixed up their helmets on the hatstand, looked at themselves in the mirror, an' then turned round an' said in chorus:

'Bier und brenkfast.'

"They were billeted upon us. Before they left that afternoon they had eaten and drunk up everythin' in the house. They communicated with the Central Office to some tune, for two hours later a wagon arrived an' shot out bottled stuff an' provisions enough for startin' a store, an' it took the product of four summer fashion poems an' a course of Latin lectures to

settle the bill the driver brought.

"We had those troopers with us for a week. They slept in their boots in our beds, an' they skeered Mrs. Tinker out of her wits every time she saw them with their lingo an' goin's on. They could roll out German songs to the piano till the sentries outside j'ined in the chorus, but the only English they knew related to the provision trade. They tried to talk Latin to the college man, but he'd only learnt the classical side of it, an' they only knew the modern, so they had to leave it at that. Never a word of information could we get. To all our questions they only shook their heads an' replied : 'Anodder Lager Bier,' till it got too expensive to talk to them.

"An' all the time, day an' night, the sentries marched outside, an' cavalry an' artillery rode up an' down. Was nothin' else ever goin' to happen? Was the grouse-shootin' never goin' to end, an' the fun begin? Were we never goin' to have a

look-in?

"We passed notes to our neighbours; we bored holes in the walls and talked through hose pipes; we met at night on the roofs. Tommy Travers, who lived at 34, volunteered for active service, an' shammin' lunacy—with a Noah's ark in one hand an' his life in the other—he set out one midnight to make his way to the open country to gather information. In the outskirts, he was set upon by Imperial cavalry, but his Noah's ark saved him, an' he was flung into

a cell underneath the Imperial Central Office,

where we eventually found him.

"By the Sunday we were in communication with the adj'inin' districts, an' a gen'ral risin' of the whole city was planned for Tuesday. We spent Sunday night 'ilin' the castors of Mrs. Tinker's mangle, an' the college man's piano, as these articles were to be used for barricadin' the street end against

Imperial troops.

"On Monday mornin' I was up early for bay'net exercise with the poker. I heard the front-door bell ring. I looked outer the window, an' there was a British postman deliverin' letters from an Edward Rex parcel van. I rushed downstairs an' j'ined in the commotion. Where were the Sauerkrauts? Had we beaten 'em badly? Where was the shootin' done, an' who did it? An' what was the reason of the whole blamed thing?

"The postman looked at us stolidly. There's a penny to pay on that letter, missis, as it's over four ounces,' he said, 'an'

I'm too hoarse for any more talkin'.'

"By this time the whole pop'lation was in the streets, shakin' hands, an' laffin', an' congrat'latin' one another that the fightin' had come off at last with someone else's mangles an' pianos. Then we gave three cheers an' trooped down to the Town Hall, late the Imperial Central Office, an' learnt the worst.

"An' a pretty bad worst it was.

"The Emperor I have alluded to as Richard hadn't attended much to his army of late. He'd bought no new guns, an' he'd laid in no store of shot, an' instead of drillin' his men lie'd spent his time learnin' chemistry an' 'lectricity an' science. Other sovereigns took it for granted that Richard was wanin' inter his dotage, an' sent him picture-books an' new phonygraph cylinders, but Richard was wideawaker than ever.

"Professor Bamberger had invented a new gun in his laboratory. It wasn't a shot-gun. It fired invisible rays. They were funny sorter rays that hadn't been known before, an' for want of a better name they called 'em O.P.Q. Rays; an' this yarn of mine has been full of 'em all the time, though maybe

you haven't noticed it.

"The O.P.Q. Rays didn't cure disease or take photographs. They did what chloroform does, but they did it nicer. They sent you to sleep, an' they could be worked in the open air, an' their action travelled miles, an' didn't hurt afterwards. That was Professor Bamberger's discovery, an' Richard worked it.

"He had five of these guns sent over to



"He was set upon by Imperial cavalry."

A ----

England as gas-engines. Then he had some manœuvres on the coast that made the British attachés laugh. While they were laughing, Richard cabled to Professor Bamberger at Hull that the flowers were bloomin' in spring, tra la; an' the Professor rose at daybreak on the followin' mornin' an' turned the handle of his gas-engine, an' let the rays float inter Hull City. They didn't need to go in at a window or down a chimney. They jest went slick through the walls. You couldn't stop 'em with anythin' but muslin soaked in barley-water, an' nobody but Bamberger an' his Emperor knew this.

"No one got outer bed in Hull that mornin' after Professor Bamberger started twinin' his handle, an' those who were in the streets sat down an' snoozed off. Then the fleet of transports sailed up, an' the troops disembarked. They'd put Grimsby and district to sleep on the way up. They collared the railway lines an' ran trains on to York, leaving two regiments, ole Bamberger, an' a gas-engine behind for garrison duty, an' when the citizens awoke, they found their town in the possession of the enemy.

"At breakfast time that mornin' Professor Bamberger's head assistant had started to work his gas-engine outside York, an' the people were dozin' nicely when the Hohenzollern trains drove up. Leavin' strong detachments there, the main body proceeded to Leeds, where the third engine had commenced operations at noon. The fourth instrument started business at Bradford at three o'clock, an' the fifth at Halifax about tea-time. By six o'clock the Germans held the North of England from Hull to Halifax. They'd captured five cities, an' a cricketfield containin' the Prince of Wales an' the British Commander-in-Chief, without mentionin' a team of prime Egyptian batters. Then they turned the rays on incomin' trains, an' all arrivals were put to sleep, then examined, an' sent away with a permit, like me.

"News of the landin' had reached London by express engine, an' in the absence of the Secretary of State, who was playin' hockey in Scotland, the War Office clerks tried to save the nation. But they couldn't communicate quickly with the garrison towns, as the wires had been cut all over the country.

"However, in a couple of days they got together a strong force of cavalry, artillery, an' infantry at Sheffield, an' not havin' a notion of Bamberger's guns, they marched on to break the enemy at Leeds. Ten miles outside that city the leading columns of the Army sat down an' went to sleep, an' soon the whole force followed suit. When they woke, they found themselves disarmed, an' their own guns trained on 'em by the Sauer-krauts.

"They couldn't get at the Prime Minister, as he was lost on a grouse moor with the Home Secretary, but the Postmaster-General an' a friend or two got together an' made terms with the enemy, an' the treaty was

signed at York.

"Richard would only leave the country on condition that we gave him Gibraltar, Malta, Africa, an' India, besides payin' an indemnity of six hundred millions sterling. He took the Egyptian cricket team an' the captains of all the first-class counties with him as hostages, an' his victorious Army entered Bernn with them in triumph, Bamberger an' his guns headin' the procession.

"Nex' week, when the Prime Minister had been found, an' the Secretary of State for War had finished his hockey match, Parliament met, an' taxation was settled. Outer every sovereign earned in future ten shillings

had to go to Richard Hohenzollern."

"Poetry is an art that won't stand Parliamentary interference. No leadin' poem of any consequence has ever been composed with the knowledge that half the proceeds would go to swell the chest of a foreign invader. I couldn't cotton to such conditions. I looked up the trains to New York City that afternoon, an' landed five days later. That's how I became a citizen of the United States of Amurrica, an' that's why I call thishyer yarn 'The O.P.Q. Rays.'"

There was an impressive silence when the

old man had ended.

"It's a good title, and a good yarn," the drummer at last remarked.

"An' what's more, it's a true one," said Mr. Daniels.

## MRS. DISHMAN'S GHOSTS.

#### By ORME AGNUS.



was from Abner Cardiman that I first heard about the strange case of the Dishman family; and it was such a remarkable story that I sought confirmation and further details from Mr. Jarman and

those of the villagers who were intimate

with the family.

I sometimes amused myself by trying to get Abner to talk about his great secret; but though I approached the subject with all the subtlety of which I was capable, my efforts were fruitless, and as soon as Abner detected my purpose, he either became silent or markedly changed the subject. Once I made a frontal attack by telling him what the villagers believed, and asking if it were true. He looked at me, smiled sourly, and begged me to take no notice of their silliness. "A gentleman like you," he said, "ought to find summat better to do than listen to their foolishness. Maister Jarman hisself have told 'em' 'tis all nonsense," he said.

"But is it all nonsense, Abner?" I asked. But he looked at me cunningly and repeated

that the Vicar said it was.

One day, I approached the subject by asking him if he believed in ghosts. He looked at me with a contemptuous smile, as if to say that he was not to be caught that way, and then said curtly: "Some volks do, some don't. Be you a believer in 'em, zur?"

"I hardly know, Abner," I replied. "Are

von ? "

"I never zeed no ghost meself, zur; but there be volks in thease village will tell 'ce they have. 'Tiddn' exactly a ghost, but there be thik skull over to Ower Varm they daren't take away."

"They tell some fearsome tales about it, Abner. I went over there two or three weeks ago to see it, but they would not show

it to me."

"Tales enough to make your hair stand

on end," said Abner. "I zeed it once in wold Fencer's time, but 'twas just an ord'nary skull to look at. But Bill Throop, that was menden a fireplace there one day, moved it out of devilment and hid it in the stable. They had no sleep at the Varm thik night, and Bill was so scared on his way home by what he zeed and heared that he come to church reg'lar vor dree Zundays. And then, if you can take the word of a woman, there was a ghost, or a pair of 'em, in thease very churchyard."

"Indeed, Abner. I should like to hear

about that."

"It made some volks creepy, zur, vor wiks. 'Tis a woman's tale; but thease woman believed it zo zure as death."

" Is she living now, Abner?"

"No, zur; she have been dead some time. But Jack Will's wife, he that be keeper, be her husband's sister. She was a Dishman avore she married Jack."

Thereupon Abner, with a reiteration that it was a woman's tale, told me the story. It was evident from his manner in relating it that he believed it himself, and I found when I went to others for confirmation and amplification of the narrative, and they found I had not come to laugh, that they spoke of it with the certainty they spoke of the fire at Lossell Hall, or the wreek at Lulmouth. Even Mr. Jarman acknowledged that to Mrs. Dishman it was no vision.

The story concerns Lucy Mellow, who came to the village from Dorchester. Lucy came as a domestic-part housemaid, part lady's maid-to Mrs. Basterden, at Elm She was a good-looking girl, with blonde complexion and an enviable profusion of flaxen hair. Her manner was rather reserved, she did not make friends easily, and she treated with cold dignity the young men who were soon buzzing round her. But one afternoon William Dishman overtook her on her way home from Suckton, where she had been shopping, and walked along with her. He was so greatly struck with her that he sent her a letter the next day asking if he might meet her and accompany her to church on Sunday, or take her for a walk. Lucy consented to take a walk with him after service, and Dishman made such pro-

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gress in his wooing that he was able to announce his engagement to his friends that evening. He told her that he could not have believed a maid would take his fancy so quickly. "Tiddn' your looks," he said, "though you be so pretty a maid as I have ever seen, but 'tis your ways. I could think of nothen else ayter I walked home with 'ee the other day. You be uncommon, vor I tell 'ee," he added without a trace of vanity, "that I could have had my pick of maids hereabouts; but I never went ayter none since I used to walk out a maid when I was about seventeen."

Lucy was not so ready at revealing her heart; but it was not many days before she shyly confessed, in answer to his endearments, that he was the one man in the world to her.

Dishman had not boasted foolishly when he told her that it was for him to pick and choose. To use Abner's phrase, "he had a taken way with the maids, who were allus maken eyes at him." He was by common consent a fine-looking young fellow, tall, wellset-up, and athletic-indeed, his reputation as a fast bowler was known over one half of the county. Men whose cricketing days are over speak of our present-day bowling with contempt and recall Dishman's great feats. He was foreman at the Ower clay-pits and was getting good wages compared with the average rate in the locality, and altogether, it was agreed, was a man who had only to glance at a maid and her heart fluttered. There were three at least who hoped to win Dishman's favour, and it was considered rather hard by some that an alien maid should capture his affections. But when the village came to know more of Lucy, its verdict was that he had not made a bad choice, neither was there any doubt that they were fond of each other, and putting aside local prejudices in favour of the home article, it must be considered a very suitable match.

The wedding was an event in the village. Mrs. Basterden, who was very fond of her maid, lent her coach and gave the bride her silk wedding-dress and all her household linen, and Lucy's sister, Polly, who was to take her place at Mrs. Basterden's, was chief bridesmaid. Even those who disputed Lucy's claim to good looks had to confess that Polly was pretty. Unlike her sister, she was a brunette, with sparkling eyes and vivacious manner, and a smile that ate its way to the heart, and even on the wedding-day she unwittingly caused trouble by turning the regard of several young fellows

from the maidens with whom they had an understanding. She was nearly twenty at the time of the wedding, and Abner, with his characteristic chuckle, told me how he had vexed many maids by telling them that no young man who had anything but pig's eyes in his head would give them a second glance if Polly were near

if Polly were near.

William and Lucy Dishman lived together very happily—"that is, as married life do go," Abner explained. They lived in one of the two houses on the north side of the church-yard which are separated from it by a narrow roadway. The two cottages are very picturesque, with their mantle of wistaria and climbing roses, and a group of noble elms behind to break the force of the cold winds. There is a pleasing view beyond the church, but to some the situation would be intolerable with the perpetual view of the memorials of death in the foreground.

Mrs. Basterden was an old maiden lady who lived in simple fashion, and as she had three servants to attend to her wants, they had much leisure, and Polly rarely missed a day without calling on her sister and brotherin-law. Her visits generally took place in the evening, and this soon became known to the swains of the village, and there were always some of them by the churchyard wall awaiting her appearance. It was not in her nature to be discourteous, and she allowed herself to be held in conversation for a But that was the extent of minute or two. her dalliance; she bestowed no further favours on any of them, and the love-sick swains became the butt of the village humorists. Fred Drake was the boldest and most persistent of the band. He openly declared his love for her to the whole village, and vowed he would marry her or nobody. He waited hours for her at the gate of Elm Villa, till Polly forbade it, and he sent her flowers daily, till at last she refused to accept any. Lucy, who admired him, did all she could on his behalf. But all was in vain; to him and others who had the courage to propose she returned pleasant thanks for the compliment, but said she did not intend marrying.

Mrs. Dishman, who loved her sister warmly, at times got almost angry with her. "You couldn' have a nicer man than Fred," she said. "In another ten years you'll have to hunt round for a man, instead of 'em hunten for you."

Polly never lost her temper at these attacks. "I shall think the same then, Luce," she said.

"Why?" asked Mrs. Dishman.

"I'd rather be an old maid," replied

Polly with a laugh.

"I can't think what be come over you, my dear," said Mrs. Dishman pexplexedly. "When you was at home, you was allus letten the young men run ayter you. There was Arthur—"

"I've got wiser now," said Polly, laughing

again.

"Be it that you don't think much of married life ayter looken at Bill and me?" asked Mrs. Dishman with great seriousness.

"I think you are both lucky," replied

Polly with equal seriousness.

"Then I give it up," said Lucy. "Only

I feel vexed about it.

Polly was passionately attached to Lucy's children, especially the first-born, who was named after her. She was meant for an auntie, she cried laughingly. But by the time her niece was four her gaiety and laughter went; she seemed languid and weary, and her friends feared she was "going into a decline." Polly, however, maintained there was nothing at all wrong with her, and would make merry for a few minutes to convince them they were mistaken, but the effort was apparent. She had become very religious, as the village regarded it, attending church and Communion with unfailing regularity, and spending much time in reading devotional literature, and that confirmed her sister that she was about to fall a victim to consumption. "I wish you'd say 'Yes' to Fred Drake or somebody," said Lucy. "As you be, you be maken haste to your grave. worries me."

"Don't let it," said Polly; "and I wish you wouldn' say any more about it. I've nothen against Fred or any of them, except I

don't want to be a wife."

"You'll go off into a decline, then, so sure as fate," said Lucy gloomily. "Will you go and see Dr. Tetley?"

"What for?" asked Polly. "He'd tell

me I'm more well than you, Luce."

But she did not go off into a decline. One morning the village was stirred through its length and breadth by the news that Polly had been found dead in her bed. She had been suffering from toothache for some days, and had been using chlorodyne to induce sleep. By misadventure she must have taken too large a dose when wild with pain, and the coroner's jury returned a verdict of "Death by Misadventure," and expressed their sympathy with the relatives.

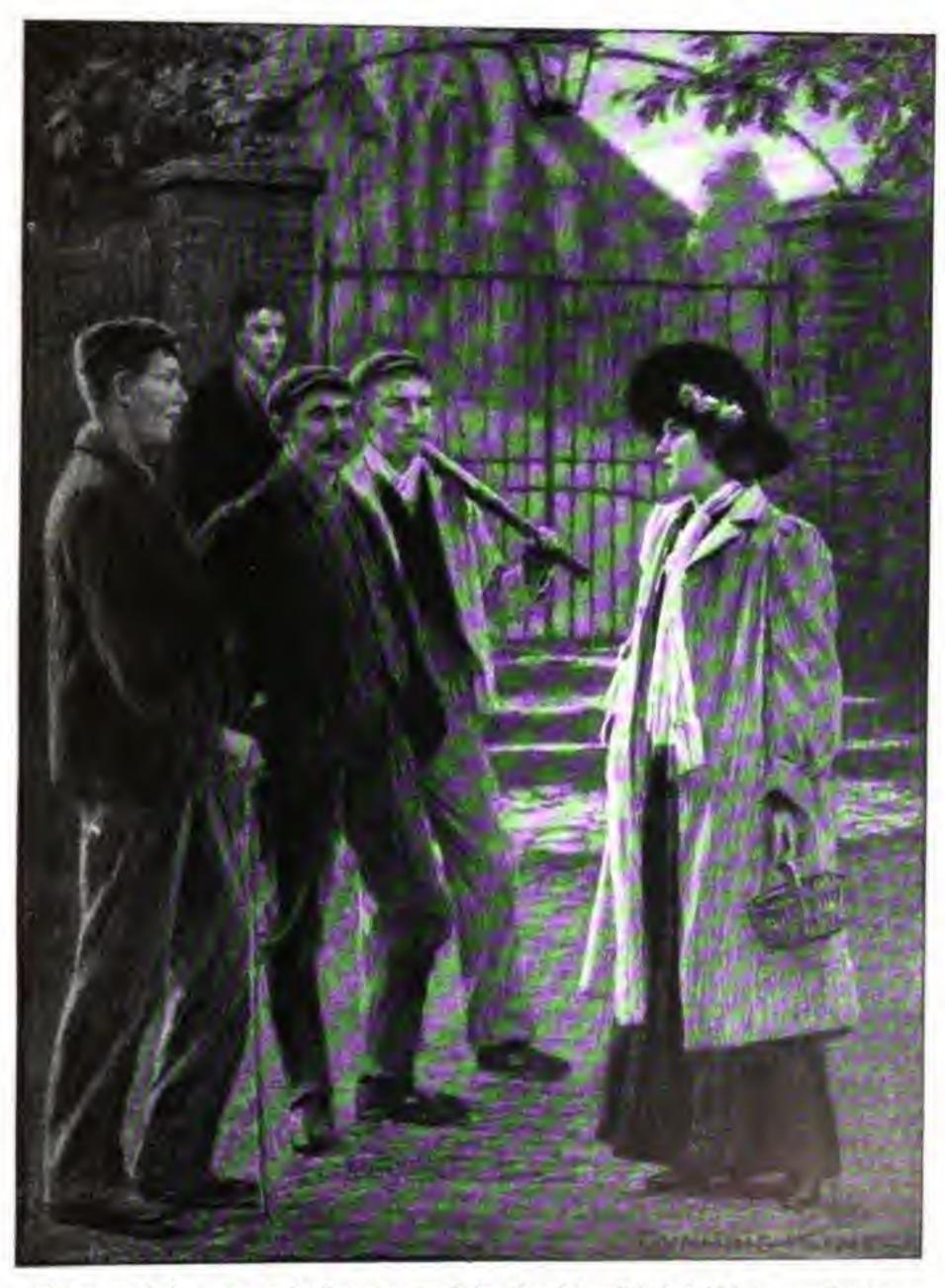
Will and Lucy Dishman felt the bereavement keenly, and the poor girl's death also deeply affected Mrs. Basterden, who claimed it as her privilege to bear all the funeral expenses. Polly and Lucy had no relatives near at hand, their father and stepmother having recently gone to Canada, and it was arranged that Polly should be buried in our churchyard, in a new grave with a granite headstone which Mrs. Basterden had provided near the site she had chosen for her own grave. It was in plain view from the Dishmans' front door, and Mrs. Dishman expressed her satisfaction. She could feel, she said, that Polly was not far away, and instead of aggravating her grief it would assuage it. Abner told me he well remembered digging the grave, for the air that day was close and thundery, and the ground was terribly stony. "It made I sweat, just about," said Abner. "Volks ought to pay double for a grave in thik part, 'tis zo stony."

Lucy Dishman had loved her sister deeply, and was greatly affected at her sudden and untimely end, but, according to her own account, her husband was almost prostrate under the blow. "He'll sit," she told her friends, "thinken about it without speaken, and I see the tears come into his eyes, and then he'll pretend the smoke from his pipe got into 'em. He was very fond of poor Polly in his way, and often asked I to let the poor maid please herself when I wanted her to pick out a man. She was so good a maid as one ever met, and everybody thought so, but she'd taken some fancy in her head against the nat'ral state of women, or she'd have been alive at this minit. Somebody

lost a good wife."

Eleven months after her sister's death, Lucy Dishman was struck another and a heavier blow. Her husband got wet through at his work one day when a chill east wind was bringing a heavy rain with it. He made light of it, a wetting being a mere incident in his work, but a day or two later he was confined to his bed seriously ill. "Newmonny, Dr. Tetley called it," explained Abner with fine scorn. "Twas just to show everybody how clever he thinks he be, and vrighten volks with long words, but 'twas just plain inflammation of the lungs, and Bill Dishman had got it bad."

Just when the crisis seemed over, heart weakness supervened, and Mrs. Dishman was left a widow with three young children, one a baby a few months old, to provide for. Even regarding her Abner did not express



"It was not in her nature to be discourteons, and she allowed herself to be held in conversation for a minute or two."

much sympathy in telling me the story. "'Twaddn' zo bad vor she as vor some," he said. "She waddn' more than thirty, and not ill-favoured, and she could pretty well make her choice vor another husband. Of course, there was the kids, but many a man could swaller them to have she."

Sympathy was universal, and on a Friday afternoon there was a big funeral, for William Dishman was the leading Oddfellow in the village, and his brethren attended officially. But it was not the funeral, but what took place that night in the churchyard, according to the bereaved widow, that filled all "Tis a queer minds for many a day. tale as p'raps you'll laugh at, zur," said Abner, "and you med put it down to the fancies of women, but she allus stuck to it, and 'twas plain she was tellen no lies. She did zay her eyes was never opened till thik night, and it nigh drove her mad with thinken about it."

She was so full of trouble, Mrs. Dishman said, in telling the story, that she could not get to sleep that night. Some of her friends had stayed with her in the house until bedtime, and Mrs. Maypole, her particular friend, had offered to remain all night, but she had declined, feeling she would rather be alone with her grief. Her children were in the same room with her, and when she had undressed, she lay down but could not sleep; and though she tried not to give way, she wept for a long time, though her tears did not bring her any relief. She heard the church clock strike twelve, and some time after she got up and sat in the broad window-sill in her nightdress. The sky was clear, and the air still and cool, and the moon, which was past the full, was shining brightly. She sat there, trying to realise that her husband was really gone, that never more would she see him, and she would have to face the world with her children, and without his strength and tenderness to lean on. But it was not the difficulties she was called upon to meet, but the loss of the man she loved that affected her. It was cruel, cruel, she muttered to herself again and again, while the tears flowed, and she looked away across the churchyard towards the south-west, where her husband had been placed that afternoon. And as she sat and looked, her tears suddenly dried and her heart beat so loud and fast that it shook her, she said, like being in a

train. For she saw her husband had risen from his grave. She had not seen him rise, but there he was standing beside his grave. She rubbed her eyes and shook herself to be sure she was awake; but it was no illusion; he was indeed standing there by his grave! She had no doubts that it was he—even at that distance she could mark his beard, his curly hair, and his broad shoulders. could not see his face, which was in profile to her; but that beard, that curly hair she had loved as marks of his magnificent manhood, she would have known anywhere. He had on his shroud, and it seemed to her he was holding it up with one hand, so that it would not trip him. And then he turned slowly and looked at his own house, and it seemed to her that his eyes met hers, and gladness thrilled her through and through. She said: "Oh, my dear!" with a glad sob, and unlatched the window and flung it wide open and leaned out to call to him; but she found she was too agitated to call loudly, and she saw him turn round and walk across the grass towards the west. Mrs. Dishman declared when she saw him go in that direction, something told her where he was going. It was there Polly's grave was.

The graves, as Abner pointed out to me,

are not fifty yards apart.

Mrs. Dishman declared that she was not in the least frightened, but she was extremely agitated, and her heart was still throbbing violently. She was now leaning out of the open window, and her sister's grave was nearer to her than her husband's, and she could see more distinctly. Her husband walked straight to Polly's grave and stood beside it, and she was sure in her own mind, although she could not hear, that he said something. And then a strange thing happened-Polly rose out of her grave to greet him. How it was, she did not know, Mrs. Dishman explained; she did not see her rise, but she saw nothing of her, and the next moment she was standing face to face with her brother-in-law, and of course she must have risen from her grave. It was too far off in that light to see plainly, but the living woman had no doubts. She had such a vivid recollection of her sister's appearance, she explained, that she would know her by her shape and size among a thousand. Polly also was in her shroud, and decay did not seem to have touched The looker-on was so amazed and agitated that she could not move, although the sleeves of her bedgown were becoming wet with the dew. The thought passed



" Who be they, mother?' asked the child in an awed whisper."

through her mind, without seeming to her at the time at all ridiculous, that her two beloved ones out there must be cold on the wet grass. She was too agitated just then to question herself as to the meaning of this strange portent, and she could only watch helplessly and silently, save for her heart, which throbbed so violently that it seemed to her in the stillness of the night the two must hear it.

The dead stood facing each other for a minute or two, and Mrs. Dishman always solemnly affirmed that they had classed each other's hands and were talking to each other, and she could tell by their ways that they were exceeding glad to be together. She was not near enough to see clearly, but she knew, she said, as well as a mortal woman could know anything, that they were smiling pleasantly at each other. It seemed to her

that now both were dead they could talk together and tell each other what had occurred to them, as two friends might who had been sundered, and she gave a sob as she wished she also were dead and could go and join in their pleasant converse. It felt to her at that moment the cruellest stroke of all that the two beings she loved could hold speech with each other, and she was debarred. It was as though she were

dead and they were living.

She could take no account of time as she sat there watching them, but after a while they walked away together over the grass, hand in hand, as if they were going round to the church door, intensely glad, her heart told her, to be together. And then not feeling certain whether or not she was in her senses, she roused herself with an effort that caused her to sob again, and awakened her eldest child, who was nearly seven. The child cried a little at being awakened so abruptly, but she carried her to the window. "Look quick, my dear," she said, "look out yonder and tell mother what you can see. Don't be frightened; 'tiddn' dark."

Another few steps and the pair would have been hidden from view by a buttress, but the child could see them. "Who be they, mother?" asked the child in an awed

whisper. "Be they robbers?"

"No, my dear," Lucy said, "'tis a man and woman walken about in the churchyard."

"How funny to be walken about in their

nightdress!" said the child.

"Tis white clothes they have on," said Lucy, in order not to frighten the child. "Come, I'll put you back in bed again. I thought you'd like to see 'em,"

"Can daddy see 'em in his grave?" asked

the girl.

"No; come back to bed, my pet," said Mrs. Dishman, feeling she could bear none of the child's questions about her father just then.

When the child was snug again, she went softly downstairs in her nightdress, put on her shoes, unlocked the door, and went quietly and quickly into the churchyard and up to the church door. A thought had crossed her mind as she was putting on her shoes that increased her agitation. She tried the church door, but found it locked, as she had expected, and she hurried round the church to the eastern end, and mounted on Sir Roger Davy's great square tombstone to look through the window. She affirmed that, though the tombstone was quite six

feet from the window, she could see the two white forms standing at the chancel-rails. She could not see distinctly, but there was no mistaking their white forms in the dark church, with the moonbeams shining faintly through the windows, she explained.

It seemed to her a long time that she

waited there, and she pulled her nightdress closer to her shivering body. And then she wondered if she could lift herself up to the window, and essayed it, but had to give up the attempt. She climbed on the tomb again, but the two were no longer there. Fearing she had missed them, she held up her nightdress and ran round the church. There was no sign of her sister, but she was in time to see her husband standing by his grave and giving, she could take her oath, one last look at his home. The next moment he had disappeared. He went back to his coffin as easy as a stone drops into a pond,

was her phrase.

In her state of mind the supernatural had no terrors for her, and she went up to both graves, but could see nothing. She called her husband softly, and waited a little while for a response. But the dead could hold no converse with the living, and with one or two dry sols she went with reluctant feet back to her house, changed her sopping nightdress, and lay shivering in bed and almost weeping from excitement. And then suddenly, she said, the meaning of it all flashed into her mind. The strange happenings of that night had convinced her that the fondness of Polly for her husband and his for Polly was not common fondness, but "manand-wile fondness "--that they had loved each other. Neither jealousy nor hatred of the dead entered into her thought, but only sorrow for them. She knew, she declared, that they had never actually made love to each other behind her back, she was convinced that no word nor overt act of love had ever taken place between them, but that they had closely guarded from each other and from everyone the love that burned deep in their hearts. But to the dead nothing is hidden, and on that night, when they both lay near each other, they knew of the passion that had been kindled in each other's breast. In the light of what had happened that night, Mrs. Dishman felt she could plainly read the past. She could understand now why Polly would not listen to the young men who tried to win her, and it was her secret love that loosened her hold on life and sent her into a decline, and she was convinced now that the poor girl did not take

an overdose of the narcotic by mistake. It made clear to her also why her husband was so cut up at Polly's death, and why ever understand how he, the man of superb health and strength, had succumbed. His heart had not been in the struggle for life—nay, in

all probability the illness would not have attacked him if the desire for life had been strong in him.

She did not sleep at all the rest of the night, and she cried again and againnot at her own sorrows, but in bewailing the fate of her two dear ones. She rose at her usual hour and said no word of the happenings of the night, when her friends expressed their sympathy as they noted how pale and weary she was. In the afternoon she lay down and slept for a couple of hours, for it was her intention to sit up again that night and keep watch on the churchyard. Not that she really expected to see them again, she explained afterwards, for they had met and been wed, and there was now no need for them to greet each other.

She kept up her vigil till dawn, and in the course of the following day told the story to the most intimate of her neighbours. Of course they would not believe it, and told her that in her grief she had dreamt it. But when she called her child to say what she had seen, they could maintain no longer that it was a dream. had never heard such a tale, they said. What did she think was the meaning of it? It was sent as a sign, for certain. But for what? They wondered she had lived through the awful experience.

"Nonsense!" replied Mrs. Dishman. "Look zee, they was in love with one another in secret, and becost hey had to keep it secret it killed 'em both. They never done

nothen wrong nor said nothen wrong nor looked nothen wrong, I be sure as I be a liven woman, or their spirits could never have



"She climbed on the tomb again, but the two were no longer there."

afterwards there was so little of his gay humour and cheerful laughter. As she looked back on the past fortnight, she could

'Twaddn' wickedness made 'em rise. They couldn' marry here on earth, but the first night they was together in the churchyard, Bill's spirit called to her spirit, and they met in church together and stood at the Communion-rails and was man and wife. I be Bill's wife here on earth and in the law, but in the next world Polly will be his wife, and if I don't marry agen, I shall be nobody's wife. 'Tis Poll he belongs to, pore maid. Nobody could ha' been more straightforward than they two, but it ate their hearts out in secret, and they was only happy people when they was dead. Innocent as little Arthur here, they was," caressing the baby, "and I'd 'low what happened Friday night was to make it up to them. If they'd done anything wrong, they'd never have been allowed to meet one another."

Mrs. Dishman's attitude was as amazing to her friends as her story, and they shook their heads and wondered if she would have to be sent to the asylum. What she had seen had turned her brain, it was plain. Mr. Jarman went to hear her story, and reproved her sharply for her views. He pointed out to her that the Scripture explicitly states that in the next world there is no marrying nor giving in marriage. Mrs. Dishman heard him in silence, but she was not shaken. "In spite of what the good man did say," she told her neighbours, "I don't believe it, else why did they two pore dears rise from their graves the first night and go to the altarrails, which be the prapper place, and have their spirits married 'cos they couldn' on earth?" None of her neighbours could answer her.

Her friends could not understand how she could feel no bitterness against the dead, but

spoke of them with sympathy, tenderness, and regret. "I loved Bill," she said, "as a woman ought to love a good husband, and there never was a better; but I wish with all my heart that Polly had known him first, and then they both would have been liven. He wouldn' have fallen in love with me if he had known Polly first, and I med have been some other man's wife and had a sister and a brother-in-law."

"Volks was quite excited about it, zur, vor wiks," said Abner, "and some were scared just about. Mat Kelway and Bob Jameson, and two or dree as allowed they waddn' afraid of no ghosts, kept a look out two or dree nights here, but they didn' see nothen. But then 'twaddn' meant vor them; and, besides, Lucy said they were at peace now. Some volks wouldn' pass by here vor months ayter dark. Nobody could help believen that Lucy zeed they two out of their graves. But 'tis a woman's tale, zur, and you can please yourself whether you believes it."

"And what became of her?" I asked.

"In six months or zo, zur, she married John Bilson, the dairyman at Crossland's varm. But she made him promise solemn that if she died vust, he wouldn' bury her in thease churchyard. She said thease was Bill's and Polly's ground, and she wouldn' make 'em uneasy. She died seven or eight years ago, and her husband had her buried at Buller."

"A remarkable story, Abner."

"Tis true enough, zur. It made I feel quivery vor a bit when I was about alone at nights, but I never zeed nothen. Twas only meant vor Lucy to zee, I'd 'low."

#### JUNE.

THERE'S a glory of grey, green, and gold on the thatch, There's a riot of roses encircling the door, There are marigolds gay and a mignonette patch.

There's the wonder of June with its wiles and its ways, its enchantment of blue, and its shimmering sheen, And the spell of its nights and the spell of its days.

There's the glamour of beauty and youth in the air,
There's a well-trodden path leading up to the gate,
And the Rose of the roses awaiting me there.



HANTOM
FITTINGS.
BY FRANK RICHARDSON.

simply because they were whiskers — insanitary trappings —but because they seemed to me to be somebody else's whiskers.

But whose? I racked my brain. Suddenly

-Beaver-Boyd's !

Poor old Beaver-Boyd had worn a precisely similar set-worn them in that very seat. He had been celebrated (were he not dead, I should say notorious) for his wonderful crop of natural ivy and his kindness of heart. I had always liked old man Beaver-Boyd, in spite of the fact—perhaps by reason of the fact—that I knew him but slightly. He was a miscellaneous financier. One day, it was a patent unrefillable bottle; the next, a zinc mine in North Borneo; and so forth and so on. He always gave his friends the opportunity of sharing in the riches that should one day, of a surety, be his. Every club contains half - a - dozen members such as he—Heaven rest his soul! But I had been too little of a friend to him, too much of a financial featherweight to have been invited, it must be said, to lose any of my hardly earned stock. When the news of his death -somewhere in Australia, a couple of years ago, in quest of a minereached me, I felt that I owed the kindly old fellow a deep debt of gratitude-for the money I hadn't lost. But—the man with the evil face was wearing his whiskers.

Curious! very curious!
I could have sworn to them.

I walked up the main room, turned the corner into the back room, and sat down to write a letter.

Hardly had I begun, when I received a hearty blow on the shoulder—

"Hullo! my staunch companion! Back in town?"

"Le Touquet! And you?"

"Ends of the earth—Mexico, Pekin, Bayswater. I've been away a year."

"Good Heavens! My dear chap, I'm awfully glad to see you."

"But you haven't missed me?"
I looked at Gilbert Burness, the eminent

T was an evil face. Beyond all possibility of doubt, it was an evil face.

The eyes—black, birdlike, and shifty -gleamed from beneath heavy, jutting eyebrows. The man's skin was coarse and dry, yellow in texture. Deep, firm lines were graven round his thin, colourless lips. Though completely bald, save for a fringe of dull grey hair, he did not appear more than fifty years old—but for his whiskers. His whiskers - of inordinate length, woolly, cotton-woolly—sprang from his cheek-bones in the form of two huge, snow-white triangles. Benevolent, almost imbecile in suggestion, very much older than their proprietor's evident age—they were clearly misfit whiskers. Also, their proprietor wore a red tie, out of all harmony with his whiskers.

The extraordinarily inappropriate nature of his face and fittings attracted my attention to the man as I walked through the smoking-room of the Northumberland Club. It was August, and the club was deserted. As the Consolidated Club had closed for repairs, the Northumberland extended its

hospitality to the Consolidated.

Being on the committee of the Northumberland, I knew most of its members at any rate, by sight. The man with the white whiskers and the red tie must be a member of the Consolidated. As I turned over the illustrated papers on the table in the middle of the room, I looked curiously at him. The whiskers worried me. Not

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traveller, sportsman, and special corre-

spondent, and answered-

"No. Frankly, no. I only miss you when I see you. When the ordinary man is away, one makes inquiries about him. But when a man like you is visible in the four-mile radius, one suspects that he has lost his berth. Nothing the matter, I hope?"

"Yes."

The strongly built but loose-limbed man, with his deep bronze face and crisp, close,

yellow beard, hesitated.

"There is something devilish bad with me. I've seen most things; I've gone through most things; but I've never felt like—this before."

"How do you mean?"

"I don't know. This is an August afternoon. This is St. James's Street. This is the twentieth century."

"I don't understand."

"Neither do I."

Then I noticed a look of sheer, cold horror in his face as he whispered—

"Have you seen the clean-shaven man in the other room—the man with the red tie?"

"Yes, but he's not clean-shaven; he wears a full set of cotton-wool fittings."

"There is only one man in the next room."

"I know. He wears a red tie."

Burness interrupted-

"There is hell in his face."

"He is not clean-shaven; he wears whiskers—immense whiskers—whiskers like Beaver-Boyd's."

"I don't know Beaver-Boyd. This-

man is clean-shaven."

"Nonsense!"

"Go and look!"

He followed me.

As I turned the corner, I saw the man in the red tie. He was still reading his paper.

"Look!" I said. "Did you, who did not know Beaver-Boyd, ever see whiskers so

large?"

He turned on me petulantly for so big a man.

"You're mad! stark, staring mad! Do you mean to say that this man wears whiskers?"

"Obviously. A huge crop."

"You're insane about whiskers. You think they are funny."

"Beyond doubt."

"This is not the moment for merriment."
His eyes gleamed angrily at me.

"You are so interested in whiskers that

you see them where none exist."

His strong hand gripped my shoulder, and he spun me round. "Can't you ever be serious? This is not the time to talk about whiskers."

The look of terror in his eyes alarmed me.

I was anxious for his sanity. I scarcely knew how to deal with the matter. Deliberately, however, I put this question—

"Mydear Burness, don't you see the man's whiskers large, white ones?"

"Do you?"
"Of course."

"Which of us is mad? You or I — or that devil?"

"We can

serious?" he

"Certainly.
The matter
must be cleared
up."

"You will speak to him to that—seated in that chair hunched up horrible?"

"My poor friend, I will certainly ask

him whether he wears whiskers or not. The question will appear strange to him, perhaps. Beyond doubt it will appear strange to him. Because, my dear Burness, his whiskers are the most noticeable thing about him—except, perhaps, the extraordinary wickedness of his face."

"Ah, you notice-that!"

"I do. It is a shocking face. It is a

face like-a previous conviction."

Burness brought his face close to mine. His wild eyes burnt into my brain. "What do you think the conviction was for murder?"

"Nonsense!" I laughed—or, rather, I tried to laugh. "What do I know about him? I'm going to inquire tactfully, of

course—as to whether or not he wears whiskers. Irritably I added: "I hope that, after all this tomfoolery, you'll take his word for it."

Then I approached the sinister man.

"I trust, sir, that you will excuse me. I intend no impertinence. But my friend

here has been travelling a good deal tately, and his health is not, perhaps, quite as he would wish it to be."

His brows knitted. They met over his eyes. Very sternly, in a harsh voice, he answered—

"Your friend is nothing to me, sir. I can give no opinion as to his health. I am not a medical man."

Burness sat down by his side.

"I accept your plea," I continued, standing above him. "But I want your opinion on a matter that is of

my friend and myself." ndered, his eyes

"We left the porters to decide the matter."

"Look here, sir!" he thundered, his eyes flashing evilly, "I don't know you, I don't want to know you, and I won't give you my opinion on any subject except yourself! You're a nuisance, sir, an infernal nuisance!"

Then I became annoyed.

"Confound it, sir, I am on the committee of this club!"

At that instant an incredible thing happened.

Burness put up his hand in a deprecatory manner, repressive of my indignation.

His hand passed clear through the centre of the man's whisker. Right through the middle it passed leaving two inches, as it were, severed in mid-air. Horror-stricken, mystified, I shrank away,

muttering-Heaven knows what.

To my thinking, the man was wearing ghosts of whiskers. But such a thing was not possible. Still, provided I was not insane, what other conclusion could I draw from the evidence before me?

Burness's demeanour, also, seemed strange. He continued to sit, gazing aghast at the man in the —red tie. The man in the red tie

continued to read his paper.

An idea struck me.

Hastily I went to the hall-porter's box.

Brostell, the excellent, the invaluable, all things to all men, was at his post.

I took him to the glass doors.

"Who is the gentleman over there?"

"With Mr. Burness, sir?"

" Yes."

"He's not a member here. He belongs to the Consolidated. But he's very like Mr. Beaver-Boyd, who died a little while ago."

Panting, I asked-

"In what way is he like Mr. Beaver-Boyd?"

"Why, sir, he wears the same whiskers."

"The—same—whiskers!" A thrill of horror went through me. "Ask the Consolidated porter what his name is."

While he beckoned to the porter of the

Consolidated, I beckoned to Burness.

Burness came out into the hall.

The two porters looked through the doors, "What's the name of the gentleman with the white whiskers sitting over there?" asked Brostell.

"There ain't no gentleman with whiskers.

There's a clean-shaven gentleman."

Burness nudged me in an aggressive manner.

"There's only one gentleman in the room," snapped Brostell, "him with the red tie and the white whiskers."

"There's a red tie right enough. But there ain't no white whiskers," replied the other.

"Well, what do you call whiskers at the Consolidated? I've never seen bigger whiskers in my life, except on Mr. Beaver-Boyd. And they—were the same size."

"But, Mr. Brostell, this gent is clean-



"'The supernatural is a cul de sac of the intellect," Go on. I will try to follow,"

Mr. Cummidge was clean-shaven when he joined the Consolidated, and he was clean-shaven when he came back from Australia, and he's clean-shaven now. You've got something the matter with your eyes, Mr. Brostell."

That was enough.

We left the porters to decide the matter if they could.

Burness and I returned to the smokingroom-and to the man with the red tie.

No, not to the man with the red tie. Instinctively we passed by him into the back room, and threw ourselves down on a sofa. It was not the moment to drink a brandy-andsoda or to smoke a cigar. Each stared at the other.

At last Burness spoke, nervously.

"Thank you." " For what?"

"For not saying : 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio."

"Oh, naturally not." Then I lighted a cigarette.

"Do you make anything of it - anything, however absurd?"

" Nothing. Let us consider the facts," said I.

" Facts ? " Burness's tanned hands trembled. "Can you use the word 'fact' in connection with a-thing-like this?"

"We have undoubtedly certain facts in connection with it."

"And they are ? "

"Firstly, Burness, neither of us is mad.

That is something -to begin with, though the evidence is against us-against one of us."

"Either against you—and Brostell, or against me-and the porter of the Consolidated."

"Precisely. Brostell and I see whiskers. You and the Consolidated porter see none. What does that point to?"

"Nothing."

"On the contrary, Burness, it points to something possibly to a cul de sac. Possibly we may find the conclusion in that

cul de sac. The supernatural is a cul de sac of the intellect."

"Go on. I will try to follow."

"Without being snobbish or unnecessarily puffed up with pride," I continued, "it seems to me that Brostell and I have nothing in common-I don't bet-except in this matter, the acquaintance of Beaver-Boyd."

"What's he got to do with it?"

"Possibly much, Burness. You noticed

that Brostell stated that the man over there round the corner out of sight, happily — wore the same — whiskers as Beaver-Boyd,"

" I noticed that."

"Good," I answered; " and now I will put this question to you. Isn't it possible that the whiskers which Brostell and I saw on the face of the man in the red tie are only visible

to us because we knew Beaver-

Boyd?"

"Then," he " you snapped, mean to suggest that the whiskers you see are ghosts of whiskers: the phantom fittings of Beaver-Boyd. Absurd!" be cried.

"Not so absurd as all that," I answered; "there are numbers of sane people who believe in ghosts. If you can believe in a whole ghost—head, body, and legs-

surely, surely, it is much easier to believe in a small and insignificant portion of a ghost. If you can believe in a whole, no matter with what difficulty, it is a comparatively simple thing to believe in parts."

Burness pooh-poohed the possibility of

believing anything of the sort.

Irritated, I continued: "Beaver-Boyd died in Australia a year or two ago. We have just heard from the porter of the Consolidated Club that this man Cummidge this man with the sinister face-has returned from Australia. Mind you, I am



"'Just imagine the position of the man."

putting forward no definite theory, but it seems to me perfectly possible that the man in the red tie may have been instrumental in bringing about the death of poor Beaver-Boyd. I don't even know that Beaver-Boyd was murdered. I have no reason for suspecting that he was murdered. But conceive the terrible tragedy of the thing if there is anything in my theory at all! Just imagine the position of the man Cummidge, supposing him to be actually guilty of the murder! According to the story of the porter of the Consolidated Club, Cummidge has been and still is a clean-shaven man.

Yet in the eves of people like Brostell and myself he wears a full set of snow-white fittings, the snow - white fittingsof-his victim. Figure to yourself the position of Cummidge! He has murdered a man with whiskers, and whenever -whether it is in the street, in a theatre, in a club-he is in the presence of a friend of Beaver-Boyd's, the phantom fittings of the murdered man are visible upon his face."

Nervously Burness laughed.

"That is but a slight penalty for such a crime-presuming him to have committed it."

"By no means," I replied. "It is a penalty so astounding, so incredible, that it must drive the man well-nigh to lunacy."

Burness reflected for a moment.

"Of course, your theory is perfectly absurd. But I have never seen a man with so hideous, so hell-haunted a countenance."

At that moment young Harry Beaver-Boyd, a spruce young man of about twentyfour, in half-mourning, turned the corner from the main room. On his wan, white face was a look of sheer terror.

Without noticing my presence, he ordered a brandy-and-soda. When he had gulped it down, he caught sight of me.

"Great Scott!" he said. "I've just had such a shock. When I came into the club, I thought I saw my father sitting in a chair. You know, my father had the most extraordinary whiskers—they were unique."

"Sit down, Harry," said I, "I've some-

thing to tell you."

I introduced him to Burness and I told him the story of our strange experience.

His white lips were tense with agony, his eyes were starting from his head. In a hoarse voice, almost in a whisper, he said—

"The man's
n a m e is
Cummidge!
Is it Anthony
Cummidge?"
"I don't

know," I answered. "I don't know what his first name is. Did you ever see him, Harry?"
"No," he answered; "he was a great business friend of my father's.

of my father's.
The two went
out to Australia together.
Cummidge,
a fortune. As

I've heard, came back with a fortune. As you know, my unfortunate father never came back at all."

"You've never seen a photograph of this

man, Harry?"

"Yes, I have. I remember thinking that he had a most villainous face, and I was sorry that my father had any dealings with him."

" Was he clean-shaven?"

"He was clean-shaven."
Automatically, for we had no settled plan,
the three of us moved round the corner into



the main room. Harry, with slow, firm steps, walked up to the man in the red tie. I sat down on a sofa a few yards distant. By my side was Burness. Each of us strained our ears to hear what should ensue.

"My name," said Harry, "is Beaver-

Boyd."

With a start the man in the red tie looked

up from his paper.

"Your name is Anthony Cummidge?"
The lower jaw of the man dropped; his
eyes seemed to be starting from his head.

"By Jove!" cried Harry, "there is blood

on your whiskers!"

And there was.

Dead silence reigned in the room. It seemed to me that I could hear only the sound of a gurgle in the man's throat. This was an August afternoon; this was St. James's Street; in the twentieth century; a gentle rain was falling on the mackintoshes of the cabmen as they passed by the window.

Slowly the stains on the man's white whiskers spread. How long it took I don't know. Time didn't seem to pass. It stood still. The face of Cummidge was petrified, mesmerised. There was no symptom of any expression that I had ever seen in a face before, and the stains on the whiskers increased; blood-red they became, like tongues of flame burning from his checks.

"Great Heavens!" whispered Burness,

"the man's dying!"

Suddenly there was a rattling sound; a spasmodic upheaval of Cummidge's frame. For an instant he stood erect, with tight-clasped bony hands. Then he tottered forward.

The body of a clean-shaven man fell heavily to the floor.



"The body of a clean-shaven man."

### LOVE, LIKE A JEWEL.

OVE, like a jewel finely wrought,
Makes fair my gown of every-day,
It fastens in a dazzling knot
These folds that else were dull and grey,
And where I passed unnoticed by,
Love wins the glance, and holds the eye.

Had I been fair as others are,
Love had not made me seem so fair;
There is a beauty in the star
That sparkles when the heaven is bare.
No single star knows when the skies
Are riddled through with shining eyes.

Love is a jewel, fair to see;
Thus richly dowered, I envy none;
Since love is well content to be
The only gem my robe upon,
I ask no other gift from Heaven:
In Love—to me—all gifts were given.

AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.

## THE INVENTION OF EPHRAIM GADDE.

THE FAITHFUL CHRONICLE OF AN EYE-WITNESS NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME RECORDED BY

EDGAR TURNER AND REGINALD HODDER.



ADMIT right here
that the editor of
the great New York
newspaper showed
me the door when
I was three-quarters
through with the
tale I am now
starting in to tell
you; but by St.
George Washington

Steel Trust. All the same, whenever I think of poor old Ephraim Gadde, I want to pinch myself and remark, wiselike, that there are a sight more things 'twixt beaven and earth than are dreamt of on your bridge, Horatius.

Now, as you know, I'm a bit of an inventor myself, but for all that I guess that I wasn't present when professional jealousy was served out. There are no flies on me in that connection. Ef I see an invention better than mine, I take off my hat to it. I can do no more. Wal, it so turned out that Ephraim's invention was better than mine. You'll see that for yourselves when I tell you that it was something for wiping people off the face of the earth, whereas mine was merely something to keep them alive. Yes, the draw was against me. I was nowhere. Ephraim was everywhere. But, mind you, I assumed a sort of equality with him, on the ground that neither his nor my invention had as yet been publicly adopted.

It was on the liner at 'Frisco that I first met Ephraim Gadde. We were bound for Yokohama, carrying a revised edition of special correspondents and similar panoply of war to the front. According to my custom, I was one of the earliest aboard the boat. I like to watch the other passengers come on, because I've always had a sorter notion that as a passenger comes on, so he is. Wal, I was leaning over the side, when a tall, thin, beady-eyed, hook-nosed man of about fifty-five summers, wearing a soft felt hat, a

morning coat cut considerable loose, and a pair of check trousers that any high-class bank would honour at sight, stepped up the gangway with a box on his shoulder. He had already knocked a porter down for attempting to help him with it, and when he came on deck, he waved aside the stewards and insisted on humping it to his stateroom himself.

It didn't look anything wonderful—merely a long box, with supports like a camera's strapped alongside. But, skin me, it might have been worth over a billion dollars, by the way he locked his door on it to keep us honest. I was attracted wonderful. It sorter seemed to me that if the man wasn't an inventor, and if the darned box didn't contain his invention—wal, you could keep the change. Accordingly, when I had seen the rest of the passengers on and summed them up and set them down, I approached him and introduced myself by guessing that he was a New Englander like me.

"You've hit it off first time," he replied,

hooking his voice through his nose.

Then, with a sharp glance at me, he buttoned up his coat—not because he was a New Englander, but because I was.

"And," I guessed again, "maybe 'tain't likely you're on your way to Yokohama, also

like me?"

He beady-eyed me seriously, and hoped that the ship wouldn't go anyways except towards Yokohama, and that horizontally. He wasn't taking any perpendicular voyages this trip.

I reckoned this was a good opening to feel

his pulse.

"Wal, sir," I said, "I'm preternatural pleased to make your acquaintance, because I reckon I can size you up as a pretty smart inventor in your line, as I am in mine. I

know the signs. Shake!"

But, instead of shaking, his hand flew to the outside of the breast pocket of that capacious morning coat of his, and then rapidly went over the buttons, to feel if they were securely fastened. What in bustin' thunder had he got there, that he was so particular nervous about it? Mebbe, I

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"And showed him in my clear, concise style exactly why it was that the Russians ought to be wiped out."

thought, if the box contained his invention, the pocket might hold the specifications and formulæ.

I was a bit rounded up. But presently an idea occurred to me. A cocktail might possibly make him more trusting-like.

"But hang all inventions!" says I. "I'm sick of 'em. Come and have a drink."

He smiled sweetly, and we formed ourselves into a search party for the nearest bar. It was in exactly the same place as I had left it ten minutes before, and we named our poisons in a spirit of increasing friendliness. But, believe me or not, it cost me about two dollars to sift it out that Ephraim Gadde—for that, he informed me, was the way he labelled his luggage—wasn't amenable to cocktails. I couldn't draw from him nohow what his blooming invention was. I explained to

him all about my patent cellular meat-lozenge, which was equivalent in point of condensation to a hundred mammoths in an egg-cup. I told him emphatically that I carried a whole drove of cattle in my pocket-book, and showed them to him. I assured him that by means of this patent lozenge I could stow several thousands of poultry in one waistcoatpocket, and a reservoir of nourishing soup in the other, on the basis of one grain to the ton.

It was no good. He would not rise, but merely smiled down his scraggy beard in a grave and superior way. It was like opening oysters with your finger-nails. Ever since I had accused him of being an inventor, and admitted that I was one myself, he was as guarded as a prison, and the most I could get out of him was that he knew something that would throw a new light on the war.

"For the Japs or the Russians?" I asked.

"First come, first served," says he. "I'm no considerator of persons—leastways, not

under another cocktail."

"Wal, Mr. Gadde," says I, when the drink was served, "what in thunder is your invention? Look here, if it's a food, I'm up against it with my lozenge. The side that gets that starves the other out in the first round. Is it a food, sir?"

" No, it's not."

"Then it's a gun. By General Grant!

I'll swear it's a gun."

"Maybe it's a gun," says Ephraim quietlike, "and maybe it isn't a gun. But you

seem to think it is, so that settles it."

There was no getting any further with him. But as the voyage proceeded, we grew more intimate, and I noticed a tendency on his part to argue with me very seriously as to the rights and wrongs of the war. It appeared almost as if he was anxious to be reconciliated to his own conscience in the matter. Of course, I stood up in big boots for the Japs, and said it would serve the Russians jolly well right if they all got wiped off the earth.

At this his eyes glittered.

"You really think so?" he asked. "Ah! my friend, I wish I was as certain as you."

"Certain?" says I. "I guess I can con-

vince you in plain dots."

Then I took the deck and showed him in my clear, concise style exactly why it was that the Russians ought to be wiped out. For half an hour I banged at him with picked arguments, until he sighed, and then looked relieved, and at last, gripping my hand, assured me I had lifted a great weight off his mind. The Russians deserved it, and by Moses! as sure as his name was Ephraim Gadde, they'd get it. By means of his invention he would presently kill them off in unburyable numbers. He didn't like taking the life of a standing army by the acre or square mile, but the circumstances demanded it. I had done the Japs a great service in convincing him that they were in the right, and the other lot up to the neck in the wrong.

I began to feel mighty glad that I had been instrumental in saving the life of the little chrysanthemum nation. But the more I thought of it, the more I looked out of the corner of my eye at old Ephraim. He

twigged me.

"You think I've come unbuttoned in the head?" he says mildly. "But I ain't. You go an' have a double dose of nose-paint

to steady your nerves, an' then come to my stateroom, an' I'll show you. Hang it!

I'll show you."

I followed out his instructions to the letter, and rejoined him in the stateroom, ready for anything. I found that he had rigged his box up at the window like a camera on three legs.

"Now," he says, pointing out across the sea, "you observe them seagulls a-skirtin'

around over there?"

"Yes, I observe 'em," says I. "About a

dozen of 'em."

"It'd be jest the same if they was ten million," says Ephraim. "Now, behold!

I lay my cards on the table."

He looked through a peephole at his end of the box, swivelled the thing a bit to get a sight, and then pressed a button—click!"

There was a flutter among the seagulls and a chorus of screams. Then suddenly all of 'em went flop into the water and floated toes uppards on the smooth sea. In two secs there wasn't a blessed single or married seagull left in that direction 'twixt us and the circumambidextrous blue.

"Ephraim Gadde!" shouts I, dancin' with excitement, "your cards takes the pool clean! You blooming old, long-legged, morning-coated, check-trousered, mighty-mouthed inventor! An' now that you've been an' done it, tell me how in thunder it was done. How d'you pick up them cards?"

I grips his arm in my eagerness. I was right beside myself with prancin' wonder.

"No, my friend," says Ephraim, shaking me off, "there's only me knows how it's done, and I don't chuck my secrets around promiscuous. I've showed you it can be done, and I guess that's enough. When I get to the Jap-Russ prize-ring, it's for the Japs to decide whether they want the invention or not."

I grips his arm again and entreats him most humble to satisfy my ragin' curiosity. But the more I begged, the firmer he got.

"No," he says, "I've listened attentive to the ins and outs of your quintessence of meat invention, and you ought to go easy on that."

He wouldn't even let me survey the inside of the box, but shut it up right there. All the same, I sampled him up as straight wire. And then I flattened it out in my mind that the best thing I could do under the circumstances was to sail my lozenge in under convoy of his popgun. Yes, he was genuwine, and my better self told me to stick to him like a brother.

And I guess I did. From the time of the decease of them unfortunate seagulls we were together from first morning drink to last night drink. He grew confidential on many matters, but never on the invention or the specifications thereof. Which those specifications were clearly in his pocket-book, buttoned up in that capacious morning coat. His dollar bills he kept promiscuous-like about him, an' took no particular care of. But the pocket-book was different. Every now and then he would feel with his hand to see if it was safe. There was no doubt that it contained the key to the situation, and I reckoned it'd make mighty fine readin'.

As the voyage got on, I conceived a great admiration for old Ephraim. He was a livin' wonder in the way of an inventor. I can hump a bit on that trail myself, but his science simply paralysed me. He gave the stewards tips for original grub contrivances, and the barmen prescriptions for new double-shock cocktails. He taught a lot about navigation to the captain, and about boilers and cog-wheels to the chief engineer. Such a scientific reputation did he achieve that, when he let on gravely one day at the dinner-table that he was perfecting a machine which, if you fed it with beetroots, would turn out twenty-cent packets of sugar-candy labelled with the maker's name and stamped and addressed to your friends, no one doubted it for a moment. There wasn't a thing, from a needle to an anchor, that he couldn't polish up out of sight. He was a small fortune to me, for he gave away ideas right and left on everything-everything bar his gun. On that he was as silent as a wellconducted deaf-and-dumb asylum on Sundays.

At last we reached Yokohama. Ephraim made as much fuss about getting his box off as he had about getting it on. We found that the Japanese War Office had established a first-class Transport Department in the town, which the same we should have to negotiate before moving on. Wal, we drove straight there, I with my lozenges, and Ephraim with his box and his pocket-book.

When we arrived, he pushed me in first. But I did not stay long. To be plain, my reception was not excessive enthusiastic. I was told that, as the Japanese soldiers were still going strong on rice and cigarettes, my meat lozenges were a matter for mature deliberation. I might leave a sample, and expect to hear concernin' em at my American address in the course of a few months.

"It's no good," I says, when I returns to

Ephraim. "They're sick of foreign inventions. They've bin fed up with 'em. Nothing less than the Jappification of Russia by the Japs interests 'em in the slightest."

"Hm!" he replies, "it's like that, is it? Well, I guess I'll have a try, all the

same."

And in he goes serious and deliberate, with the box on his shoulder. Ten minutes later, he comes out again, still carrying his box, and accompanied by a Jap in uniform. This man, I learned afterwards, was the Inspector-General of war materials. He was a mighty great pot in his way, and evidently fancied himself a darn sight bigger gun than the one Ephraim had in his box. He was loaded to the muzzle with supercilious smiles, which seemed to express the opinion that an American citizen was always to be treated politely, no matter what no end of a conflagratin' lunatic said citizen might be. Bowing as well as smiling, he opened a door for Ephraim to pass through, and then tracked after him into an enclosure of sorts.

"Blazes!" thinks I, as he shut and locked the door behind them, "old Ephraim's goin' to give the Jap a seance with his Gatlin'."

They were gone about five minutes, and when they returned, the Inspector-General was leaning on the other's arm as if he was afraid he might lose him. Ephraim was tall with dignity, but very calm. It was evidently only what he had expected.

"The old hoss has done the trick," says I to myself. "He's bin an' gone and killed something pro bono publico, so to speak."

He was in favour, and no mistake. The Inspector-General had dropped his supercilious smiles like so many hot bricks, and was beaming most honest and affable. Ephraim wasn't proud. There was no sorter stand-off attitude about him-no feeling that a man with a patent meat-lozenge wasn't in the same universe with a chap who could take life sudden and mysterious. No, he ups and introduces me as if I was part of his invention—or, at all events, a giddy antidote Then he says something about my lozenge, and I begins to feel that he and I have formed a friendly save-and-destroy partnership. The Inspector-General was polite to me, but he was much more concerned about Ephraim.

"Wal, now," he says to him presently, "please come with me, and I'll make out

your pass for the front at once."

"Make it out for two," says Ephraim, flourishing his hand at me.

"Certainly," says the Inspector-General,

"certainly."

We went in with him to his private room, and in a brace of shakes Ephraim had his pass and also a letter of introduction. I felt things were getting very much up against the Russians.

"There's a transport sailing this afternoon," now says the Inspector-General obsequious-like, "and you can go by that. But no—it's a slow boat, and you don't want to waste any time. There's a destroyer starting to - morrow with despatches for the commanding officer, and she shall take you as well."

"'Nough said," replies Ephraim. "That'll suit us. The sooner we're there, the better

for you."

"True," says the Jap. "I almost think"—he hesitated a moment or two, and then made up his mind—" yes, the destroyer shall start to-day. Please come with me, and I'll give the necessary orders."

It seemed as if he was a bit afraid of losing sight of Ephraim. But we didn't mind that, and we followed him quite

agreeable into the general rooms.

Soon the whole place was in an all-fired hurry and scuttle. High officials were ordering lower officials about, and lower officials were playing the same games on lower still. Telephones and telegraphs were a-ringin' an' a-clickin'. Messenger boys were flying about like as they were paid by the piece. I tell you I was consumed with admiration, and I broke my bones in Jap style towards Ephraim for having given rise to all this ramping fuss. He nodded some, an' kept his hand on the box containing his invention.

An hour later the Inspector-General saw us to the destroyer. On the way we took stock of this rummy old far-eastern town, and it struck both of us pretty hard what a lot of manners and customs and things we Americans must have borrowed from the Japs without borrowin' them quite right. Between the fluffy trees like you see painted on the fans we could spot two or three transports loadin' in the harbour, an' another one gettin' up steam. There were birds in those trees, singing pretty Japanese songs. And in the streets there were little women who peeped at us under their parasols, and coolies who stopped and spat on their hands quite pleasant and homely-like and then went on again. I had an eye for tea-houses and geisha ornaments, but Ephraim hadn't. In imagination he was already looking for Cossacks and similar prey, and qualifyin' 'em for funerals.

At last we reached the destroyer, and Ephraim went headlong up the gangway with his box. The Inspector-General introduced us to the commander of the boat, with twenty-five bows to us and two or three to him, and spoke of Ephraim as admiringly as if he had already stopped the war. I was run in unlabelled, feeling like accessories, but I didn't mind. My name was on that lozenge I've once or twice mentioned to you, and that was good enough for me.

Wal, presently we were off. And the last person we saw on the wharf in Yokohama was that four aces and a king of an Inspector-General. There he stood, a-coolin'his slippers on the stones, an' a-wavin' his handkerchief after us real affectionate. Ephraim was some pleased at his politeness, I can tell you.

"I'm glad," he remarks to me, "that you put me up to backing the Jap play in this little game over in Manchuria. They're clean strain gentlemen, that's what they are. And my dollars is on 'em every time."

When the destroyer landed us, there was still a considerable quantity of miles between us and the army then lying near Liaoyang. Part of the way was covered by a railroad, but the rest was horseback. With us was a young lieutenant who had come over in the boat in charge of despatches. And he wasn't the only companion we had. Not much. Our old friend the Inspector-General had cabled across that we were to have an escort of a hundred picked men. He didn't want us rounded up unsuspecting-like by no reconnoitring Russians. We was meant to do the rounding up ourselves quite open and free.

We arrived at the camp just on the tail of an engagement of sorts. The Russians, we were informed, had attacked the Japanese lines, but had been repulsed with heavy losses of both men and guns. And they were suffering under another kind of loss as well. A huge flock of sheep and other food supplies, all careful consigned to headquarters, had been intercepted by some Yokohama roughriders, and were now being corralled in. We passed 'em just before we reached the camp. The sheep was most amusin' to watch. There was quite five thousand of 'em, as stupid as could be, an' nary a dog to help manage 'em. I can tell you they was givin' the roughriders a regular strenuous Roosevelt racket of it.

Ephraim patted his box affectionate and smoothed out his straggly beard when we came in sight of the camp. He and his staff were on the top of a hillock, watching the battle dying out miles away. He looked every inch an all-fired warrior, as he sat his horse straight and bold and held his spy-

VILTUR PRODE

"Ephraim was tall with dignity, but very calm."

glass to his eye. Our young lieutenant rode up to him and presented his despatches. Then a bit of a confab ensued. Presently I saw the lieutenant chap point towards us at the bottom of the hillock. Our friend at Yokohama had told him something about Ephraim's invention, and I had weighed in a

bit more on the voyage, and I guessed he was now lettin' on big about it.

In a few moments he comes galloping back and says the General will give us an audience. Up goes old Ephraim, with his box on his

> shoulder, and hands in his letter of introduction. I follows, and looks on very interested.

> When the General had read the letter, he propounded some questions. Ephraim replied short and confident, and then unbuttoned that morning-coat of his. Yes, I had guessed right. Out came a corpulent pocket-book, and from it Ephraim took a bundle of papers. As he flourished 'em about, the General held out his hand for 'em. But the old 'un drew back and replaced 'em in his pocket-book.

"No, sir," he says, "I don't deliver my specifications till the exchequer arrangements between me, as vendor, and you, as purchaser on behalf of your Government, is properly fixed up."

"Wal," says the great soldier, pointing to the box. "let me see what you can do with it."

"Certain," replies Ephraim. "Show me a thousand Russians, and I'll prompt convert'em into dead 'uns for you."

The General smiled in a wrought-iron sorter way.

"Good," says he short and crisp. "Choose your own target!"

Ephraim says: "Wal, I'm noticing that you ain't quite silenced them Russian guns yet. Some of their shells are still rollin' in hereabouts. That was the last one"—he pointed to a

spot some five hundred yards away where a shell had just burst. "Now oblige me by signifyin' where the battery is which is firin' 'em in, an' I'll wipe out that battery."

"But," objected the General, smiling cynical, "there's a leak in that proposition. The battery's a long range one inside the

Russian lines, and we shan't be able to tell whether it's you or our own guns that have silenced it."

"I see," says Ephraim ; "you want to hold

an inquest like."

He cogitated a bit. Then he cocked his eyes around and at last settles 'em on to the sheep the Yokohama roughriders had captured. They were about half a mile from us, heaped together on a clear piece of the plain.

"Say, General," he says, "are you settin' any partickler sorter value on them sheep?"

"No," replies the General, "we don't want 'em, so long as they don't get to the Russians. Try your hand on 'em. But be quick."

I could see by his face that he thought old Eph was engaged in a gigantic bluff, and that the Inspector-General of war materials was gettin' dotty, to send him and his wooden gun up to the front.

"They won't get to the Russians none,"

says Ephraim.

Very deliberate and careful he rigged up his box on its hind-legs and swivelled it in the direction of the sheep. As I watched him I thought of them seagulls that I'd seen him put to sleep so peaceful. I wondered how this affair would come off. A dozen gulls might be easy enough, but five thousand sheep was somethin' different. Old Eph was up against a mighty big handful, no matter how many aces he held in his own hand. Mebbe he would singe the old ram on the off side and make some of the others skip a bit and shake their tails, but, skin me! at half a mile it was a pretty steep slaughterin' order. Somehow or other I began to think the old 'un had bitten off more than he could chew-and, mind you, five thousand live sheep take some chewin' even when they're dead.

Suddenly he straightened himself up. I thought for the moment that he was goin' to say his light had gone wrong, or his fuse had got wet, or some cry off of that kind. But no; there were none of them sorter flies on

him.

"Say, General," he proclaims, "I was forgettin'. There are some men with them sheep. They must be withdrawn, or they'll be killed. There must be nothing within a hundred yards of the sheep all ways."

The General looked a trifle more interested

in the proceedings.

"See to it," he says to one of his staff, who streaks off on horseback immediate.

As for me, I began to smell roast mutton. "Now, General," says Ephraim, "I'll ask you to stand back. I'm going to give her high pressure, an' it's just a fraction risky."

The General nodded, and, saying that he would give him every chance to show what he could do, withdrew with his staff to another hillock adjacent. Ephraim waved me away also, an' I tracked after 'em.

In about five minutes the men in charge of the sheep had been cleared off, and the bleaters were left grazing lonesome. All was ready, an' old Ephraim stood by his gun lookin' like a photographer takin' a last critical survey of a family group. Just then a shell from the Russian battery, which had evidently fetched the range pretty correct, fell and busted a couple of hundred yards away from him. But he took no notice of it, and simply held up his hand as a signal to us that he was about to go ahead.

It was an exciting scene. First Ephraim sighted his gun more exact at the flock. Then he stepped back a little, as if he didn't want to be too near when it went off. And then, leaning forward and stretching out his long arm, he touched the button. I looked towards his five thousand peaceful enemies to

see what would happen.

My stars! big things happened before you could say "Whizz!" There was a stampede among the sheep, and for once in their lives they ran all in different directions. But it only lasted a moment. Then all of a sudden they collapsed in heaps and lay still. Ephraim had chewed 'em up, every ram's son of 'em. I felt some frightened. I tell you my heart went slick down into my boots at the idea of an ordinary American citizen being able to kill things thus wholesale.

But the General took it differently. He was not frightened—only wild with excitement. Swift and sudden he dashed his glass on the ground, scrabbed off his horse, and started towards Ephraim. He evidently intended to hook the invention at once, no matter how many million dollars was the price. But he was too late. Yes, too late—the Russians hooked it first.

How do I mean? Wal, I'll tell you as soon as I can control my voice. Here! give me a holt o' that cocktail. Thanks. I feel

better now, and I can talk about it.

It was the hardest blizzard in the way of luck that it ever waltzed my way to witness. Just as the General came down his hillock, old Ephraim was standin' on the top of his, erect an' imposin' in his capacious morning coat and check trousers, with one hand on the box and the other on the pocket that held the secret. One moment he stood thus. Then whizz! a shell came screaming through the air and, alighting at his feet,



"The General stopped in his tracks and flung himself on the ground. I, who was following him close, did the same."

burst with a concussion that shook the earth.

The General stopped in his tracks and flung himself on the ground. I, who was following him close, did the same. Presently we got up, safe enough, and rushed on towards the spot where the shell had fallen. We reached it almost simultaneous and looked around us.

The top of the hillock had been completely smashed up. Pieces of stone and heaps of earth were lying promiscuous all down the slopes and away beyond. It must have been a big shell, and a big gun that fired it out. And Ephraim—where was he? And where was his invention? We ran here and there, stumbling over stones and into new-born holes, and searching with all our eyes. Nary a sign anywhere. Ephraim, too, had been smashed up. Nary a sign, though we and others who joined us searched fierce and anxious. It was most threatening that he and his wonderful box had been blown to atoms.

"Lost, lost!" cried the General. There was no cynical smile about him now. "But"—he turned to me as he spoke—"but perhaps you——"

I shook my head on it.

"Has he any friends? Is there no one else knows the secret?"

Again I shook my head on it.

"No one," I said. "But I sorter believe it was all set down in that pocket-book of his."

"Quick, quick!" cries the General to some of his men. "Search for that pocket-book. Search for the papers in it. Turn over all the loose earth. There must be something."

But there was not. They grubbed round and raked and sieved as if they was after big diamonds. There was not so much as a bit of cloth that could be identified. Poor old Ephraim, with his box and his pocket-book, was clean disintegrated.

The General was full up with despair. One of his aide-de-camps tried to console

him by saying -

"But there's one fortunate thing, General.

If that shell had come a little later, it would have killed you too, and we should have lost our best leader."

The General turned on him sharply.

"And what if you had?" he cried.

"Better that all of us should have perished than this one man."

Then, turning in the direction of the battery that had done the mischief, he cried-

"Ah! if I had only let him do as he wished, that shell would never have been fired. But they won't fire many more. Ride! Ride! some of you. Order a general advance. But concentrate on that battery. I order that it be taken at all costs. Let the cavalry work round towards it, and then, covered by artillery, charge it. Ah! it must—it shall be taken!"

He lashed the words out fine, and stretched out his crooked fingers towards the Russian lines. At that moment I believe he could have strangled the men responsible for that shell most cheerful.

Presently the general advance began. But there was no advance about me. I circulated round that hillock a bit more, and then strolled over to the sheep. As I fetched up to 'em, they looked as if they might be asleep, barrin' that they were piled together somewhat uncomfortable. But when I got in among 'em, I saw that they were dead sure enough. I kicked two or three of 'em—nary a bleat. I felt the pulses of some more—nary a beat. They were dead—as dead as mutton.

I stood right there in the midst of the biggest slaughteration that ever was, and, while the renewed battle blazed away in the distance, I asked myself what all-fired process it was by which Ephraim Gadde had been able to slay like this by a mere click half a mile off. Was it a sort of wireless lightning a streak or two ahead of Marconi? Was it some force which would fly straight to the nerve-centres of living things at which it was directed? Was it, mebbe, something of the vril kind?

I couldn't say then, and I can't say now. You can't say. I guess Ephraim alone knew, and I also guess his secret died with him.

### NOVEMBER.

WINDS to the Autumn earth are sighing,
"Rest now, sink drowsy to quiet dreams."

Earth to the restless wind replying,
"Rouse me, awaken when crocus gleams:

Still, in their house of darkness lying,
Unresisting my children rest."

Winds to the Autumn earth go crying,
Earth gives answer, "Yea! sleep is best."

## THE DREAM-HAWKER.

### By UNA ARTEVELDE TAYLOR.



HE little, deserted, grey town lay lost amongst wide plains of pasture and cornland. A spell of sleep had fallen upon street - ways and market-place; a spell of sleep had fallen upon the taverns and the

stalls; upon the wharf by the stone bridge; upon the river that ran under its arches. It lay, too, upon the antiquated hostel, the Inn of the Crescent Moon. The Inn, with its courtyard, stood, a wide frontage of latticed windows, at one side of a wide, irregular, stone-paved square--the central point of the straggling township. Fronting it on the further side was that other Guest-House, the Guest-House of Souls, the great jewelwindowed church of holy Helena. From its high niche the saint's effigy, enshrined above the cavernous gloom of the tower's vaulted entrance, might survey the faded blazon suspended over the Inn threshold, the blazon of a moon like a silver sickle on a blue night strewn with six-pointed stars. And blessed Helena, who in the country-folk's invocation "dreamed a dream," might almost be regarded as the patroness of the whole locality, since to her intercession was also ascribed the Fountain Well, occupying the centre of the square, although in truth its miraculous origin dated from pagan times of drought.

However this might be, it would seem that the saint of dreams was, in some measure, also the donor of sleep, and when the mellow bells dropped their slow, vibrating notes upon sunlit or rain-dark air, each chime was wont to sound as though it rang a serene requiescat

to the hours that die.

At rare intervals, drawn by the renown of that old church, with its strangely gorgeous windows and architecture of mixed Romanesque and Gothic invention, infrequent guests, coming for a night, would prolong their stay. Some had remained, it was reported, even for a year. The English lad, the last guest the Crescent Moon had entertained, who had sauntered into the town with

nothing but a knapsack in his hand—he had stayed and stayed, till his friends had forgotten to wonder at his disappearance. When he, at long last, took his leave of inn and church and fountain, it was with a slow backward look, and, once more in the common world of his old life, was it fancy of his friends, or had he undergone some change? To watch him was like looking at a familiar scene through gauze. The sun shines on summer trees, sparkles on the pond, lies warm on the field of sorrel and clover-only the gauze is between your eyes and all those common things, and by that one thin interposition the near has taken to itself the semblance of the far off.

Now it was harvest-time in the plains. The little lost town, with its winding river, lay a grey blot with leaden ribbon, amongst fields of ripe yellow grains. All day long a man and a woman had been driving towards it through hedgerows powdered white with dust and fragrant with honeysuckle, through meadows where men were reaping, women binding the sheaves, and children playing, gleaning, sleeping; driving on and on under the blueness, intense as blueness can be, of the August sky. Both were of those whose life has run on the levels of what is called happiness. Both had passed their youth, both bore the stamp of unruffled years, tranquil and contented, upon their features. They possessed the goods of the world's giving. They possessed the greater gifts of those children of men who demand no fulfilment of vain illusions. To others the kingdom of passion, with all its crises of joy and despair. They had never knocked at the outermost gate of that temple of the gods. For emotion, a sober affection; for union, a kindly comradeship. What more could man ask of woman or woman of man? Life is life-let us live life as it is, neither as better nor worse, neither as a rapture nor a fever, neither as an ecstasy nor as a madness! Thus they had lived it, unexpectantly, monotonously, calmly, with the sedate record of ships anchored in wind-sheltered havens.

Chance had brought them to the plain-

lands, chance had directed their summer-day wanderings to the little world-forsaken town. They had reached its first outskirts; dismantled tenements, cottages disroofed and fallen to ruin, bronzed with dry mosses, overgrown with orange lichens, with lilac-flowering vetches, all told of a drowsy, serene decay.

In small courtyards the verdure of miniature ferns fringed every moist nook, sunyellow wallflowers, ground-ivies with red, thread-like stalks, pink, spotted and bloodcrimson snapdragons rioted in the interstices of crumbling masonry. Nature, wherever she found a vantage-ground, made manifest her abiding desire to efface the handprint of

Tired with the heat of the long day, the horse made slow progress as the road, ascending slightly, led through what once had been the western gate in the city ramparts. The two were walking, waiting from time to time to let the dust settle as the wheels of the carriage rattled over the first paving-stones. The heat was lessening, the afternoon drawing to its close, the sun was sinking towards the horizon as they crossed the three-arched stone bridge over the river with its little deserted wharf where coastmen from far off sea villages had once moored their brownsailed boats and landed their cargoes of silver-scaled fish. Beyond the bridge was a wider street, leading to the market-place.

The market-place was empty, the stalls were bare. Only one figure moved amongst them, the figure of a ragged pedlar. As they approached, he came towards the entrance; a broad hat slouched over his brows, a yellow scarf knotted at his throat, the gold of heavy rings in his ears. The woman paused. "He stands like the toll-gatherer at the gate," she said, and with a quick impulse she laid a coin in the pedlar's

It fell to the ground. With a sudden swiftness the man swung his pack to his shoulders and with long, swinging steps went his way, murmuring to himself in words they could not catch. Soon he turned down a side street, and the bent figure was lost to view.

"A crazy beggar!" the woman's companion laughed. "What made you give him that?"

"I do not know," she answered. "He looked ragged-old-or-was he old?" she asked, hesitating.

"What matter?" the other answered.

"Come!"

They passed on.

The low sun shone in their eyes. The air

was bathed in a phantasmal splendour of rose and amber lights; the massive square of St. Helena's tower rose high above the roofs, it rose against the radiance in dusky amethyst, shadowed with deep purples, broad streaks of translucent green stretched southward and northward, overhead the sky was still blue.

A silence fell on the woman. Her eyes were dizzy with the glow.

The man broke the silence.

"Do you remember," he asked, "I believe

to-day is our wedding-day?"

She laughed. She had remembered that he had forgotten. It is a date even the least emotional women bear in mind; it is the record of a final triumph or—of a final 1088.

Behind the houses the belated salesman was crying his wares. Now and then they caught the tones of voices by open windows, or the sound of passing footsteps reached their ears. The woman lingered.

"I will go on—you are tired. It is straight

Shall I?" her companion said.

She assented, she would follow more slowly—he would make all ready at the Inn.

He left her. In the windless heat the coppercoloured pigeons flew heavily homewards, with iridescent breast-feathers catching gleams of metal from the sunset. She was conscious of a drowsy lassitude, her eyes were fixed on the crimson blaze of the west. Glass windows became sheets of flame as they reflected She felt as if she were surthe sunrays. rounded by some wild transformation scene of colours at a fantastic pantomime.

The monotonous voice of the wandering hawker haunted her ears. He was still crying his goods. The cry came nearer, receded, came nearer again, as she moved on with laggard feet. At length once more his tattered figure came into sight bent double under his heavy pack. He looked this way and that, paused here, then hurried by—halted—then he was coming towards her on the opposite pavement. She watched

him mechanically.

"Who will buy-?" his cry, muffled, husky, was close at hand. Perhaps she was tired, tired with the long day's drive, with the sun-glare, with the tremulous quiver of heat on the high-roads, with the breath of little parched winds which fanned the leaves only to hotter languor. She was exhausted with an exhaustion she had never experienced. And surely her ears, her brain were playing her false—or what was that ragged salesman crying?



"The market-place was empty, the stalls were bare. Only one figure moved amongst them, the figure of a ragged pediar."

" Dreams! Dreams! "

Yes, she was sure, now.

"Dreams, who will buy-?"

The colour-curtain changed. The roseglow had burnt to orange—the tower reared itself above, a black-purple shadow, unreal as a vision, sombre, yet suggesting a dark transparence. She who cared nothing for such things was aware that she had never seen anything so beautiful in all the world of her narrowed life-days.

The pedlar came closer—he was crossing the street: he stood beside her; he halted abruptly, and her eyes met his. His eyes were young, not old, they were sca-blue, keen as a hawk's in the sun-bronzed face, their gaze was like a touch as it fell on her.

She heard him laugh softly.

"Dreams! Dreams! Dreams to sell—a dream to sell!"

"What kept you so long? I was afraid you had lost the way," the man said when presently she reached the Inn. "I was just coming to look for you."

He did not notice that she gave no answer to his question, as she entered, with him, the

doorway of the Crescent Moon.

It was some two hours later. In the silvergreen twilight of the day that had ended and
of the night which had begun, the two sat
in the garden of the old Inn. Magnolias
covered the walls, filling the air with overmastering fragrance, trumpet-lilies bloomed
ghost-white in the flower-beds. The woman
watched in silence the gradual rising of the
copper-coloured disc where the harvest moon
ascended a steel-blue sky—the great globe
seemed hanging in vacancy, it belonged
neither to earth below nor yet to heaven
above. Presently her companion left her to
pace up and down the moss-tufted walk.

"How silent you are!" he exclaimed after a while, coming back to where she sat. "Are you tired, or shall we see what the town can

show by moonlight?"

"Tired?" she moved at once. "Not tired, no; how should I be tired? Has there ever been such a night?" she added almost under her breath.

Together they sauntered out through the arched entrance of the courtyard. Amidst the white sheen the church stood in a dim mystery of beauty.

"It looks as if it wanted to speak," the woman said. "It is watching us, see!"

Her finger pointed where one stained window, the window near some inner lamplit shrine, burned like a live ruby in a black-walled transept. Hitherto her unaccustomed silence only had awakened the man's passing notice. Now something unfamiliar in her voice caught his attention, a note in it was new, the words, absently spoken, were strangely unlike her.

"What?" he said, "what are you saying?" Then, looking at her more closely: "You are overtired. Go back and rest. I

believe you are half asleep already."

"Oh, no." She drew her hand over her eyes as if to brush aside some floating cobweb.

" No, no, I am wide awake."

She seated herself on the stone steps of the Fountain Well a few paces back. Half the square lay in light, half in the deep shadow of church and tower. And the ruby window burned on, an eye watching them in the dark, or—was it a signal? The whole town slept, dumb in its midnight sleep. The meagre drip of the exhausted fountainjet was the one pulse that beat in the stillness. The man's eyes were fixed on the ebony water in the shallow basin at his feet. A quarter-hour chimed from the tower. Then there was a far-away sound in the dusk of silence.

"Hush!" said the woman, lifting her head. "Hush! listen!"

Her companion turned sharply towards her. An unwonted disquietude was gaining possession of his mind. She was so curiously different from her old self, yet he could hardly say in what the difference lay.

"What are you listening to? What is it?" he asked. Then he too listened. The voice in the distance was nearer, more audible. "What are they crying so late?" he said, as he caught its sound more clearly. "It is a strange hour to choose."

"Not strange, not strange," the woman murmured, smiling to herself. "It is

only-"

"Only what?" The man tried to break away from the impression which every moment grew on him. It seemed to him that she had passed into some remote solitude; as if they two, side by side in that slumbering town, were each alone and apart, as if an immense space divided them, as if in very truth for him, for her, the other was not there. He laid his hand on her shoulder. "I tell you, you are half asleep," he said, bending over her.

She was very pale, but her eyes as she



"Almost unawares he barred the vagrant's path with out-held hand. 'Have you none left for me-for me also?' he cried."

raised them to his were full of a great surprise, a surprise of an unlooked-for joy.

"It is the dream-seller," she said. "Buy!

Will you not also buy?"

The vague dread at the man's heart took sudden shape, it defined itself into a terror.

"Come back to the Inn." He stooped and half lifted her from the stone step. "Come back now, at once," he went on urgently. "The sun has been too much for you; you must come back and sleep."

Smiling, she laid her arm round his neck with an all-unaccustomed gesture.

"Buy!" she whispered in his ear.

He led her back to the Inn, tending her as never before he had tended her. A dumb fear, a solicitude that ached with a pang at his heart, stirred within him. He laid her on the lavender-scented sheets, her hair threading the pillows as if with the fine gold filagree tracery of old Italian tissues, the "golden wire" of old poets' songs. pallor was gone, there was a flush where the lashes of her closed eyes touched her cheek; her lips were red as rose-berries. He watched by her till she slept—it was the slumber of a happy child. Fear left him. He smiled at himself because he had been afraid. had only been tired, all was well with her. Leaning against the framework of the open window, he looked out. The scene had again shifted. The phantasmal mystery of the old church was no longer in shadow, a soft illumination was spreading over it. moon was sinking, but great stars covered the sky with lanceheads of white fires. A film of silver-green, faint as chrysolite, lay over the stonework of the houses enclosing the square. It was so still that he could even from that distance hear the drip of the fountain-jet. Mechanically he counted the number of strokes as St. Helena's clock chimed again. Then, listening as the last vibration quivered into stillness, he heard the sound of a footfall; someone, surely, passed near the acacia tree at the further side of the square; someone lurked there, under the red ruby window which gleamed across the dividing space.

"Dreams! Dreams!" This time the

cry was plain.

Who was it thus haunting the summer night? He would go out and see for himself. He glanced at the bed, at the sleeper. Yes, all was well with her, and he would come back at once; she was safe, she would not miss him. He opened the door with heedful care lest she should waken. Down the stairway, through the little court; out beneath the arched entry the air met him with a breath of warmth. His eyes searched the star-twilight; surely there, along the pavement skirting the houses that bounded the square to the left of the Inn, someone moved-moved slowly from house house. As he looked a little way off, some ten houses to the left, a window opened A sleeper had heard and in the wall. wakened at the cry? Below the window the wandering crier stopped. From the stone window-ledge above, a hand reached down. From the pavement below, an arm stretched up to meet the hand, then the hand was quickly withdrawn, the window was shut to. The figure upon which the man's eyes were riveted came nearer, he could see it now clearly. It was-he knew it wellYet no—he had been bent, he stooped like an old man, this haunter of the night-fall was erect, strong, lithe—

"It is not he—it is not the same," the man murmured to himself; "he was old and

bent."

"Yes, it is he," the Hawker stood at his side—he laughed low as he spoke. "But my pack is light now, very light, very empty. They are sold, my wares. She"—he pointed to the window of the Inn—"she bought the best of all."

He made as if he would go by.

"Who will buy? who will buy?" The cry was almost a whisper, yet the listener's pulses beat as he heard it. "Buy—you also buy!" the woman had begged—the woman who lay within, her hair like threads of gold and her lips like the scarlet berry of the rose. Buy—what? Almost unawares he barred the vagrant's path with out-held hand. "Have you none left for me—for me also?" he cried.

Had the heat of the summer night fevered his brain? he asked himself a moment later. He stood alone; the Hawker was gone, his cry was dying away, muffled, jarring, insistent, in the streets behind the square.

Then a touch was on his arm. The woman was with him, smiling as she laid her hand

in his.

"I could not sleep longer, it was too beautiful a night for sleep. I had to come. I knew I should find you."

"I wanted you," he said. "I never knew what night could be till now. I wanted

you," he repeated.

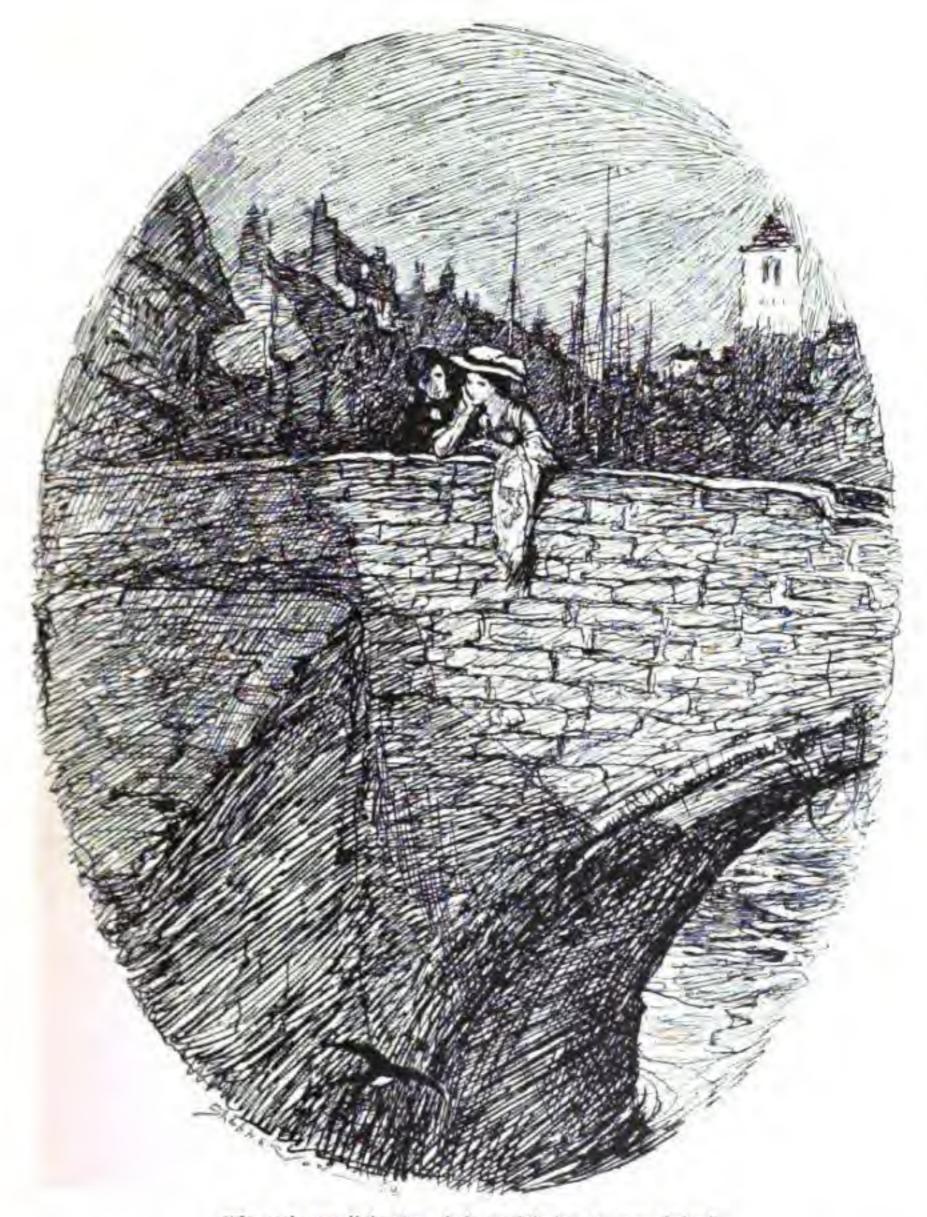
They passed beneath the feathery foliage of the giant acacias. The moon had set, but the ruby window glowed and flamed.

"You have me, heart's beloved." Her

hand in his stirred.

"And still I want you," he answered.

It seemed to her that a wind-wave of youth, the whole youth they two had missed, was sweeping towards them from some immense doorway thrown open in the night, from some infinite reservoir of strength and sweetness and fire and dew, where the wings of life were for ever outspread and the passion of life was for ever upwelling. And that great stream was nearing them, the tree shadows swayed to and fro in the advance guard of its current, the leaves fluttered in its first breath. All the serene years of the tranquil past were effaced, all the unrest of a



"In each rose-light the whole world's beauty was theirs."

great expectancy shook her citadel of peace to its foundations.

"Come!" she cried, "let us go towards it."

"What need? It is already here," the man answered her very thought.

Her eyes filled with the tears of an unmeasurable gladness. That spiritual hurricane had welded thought to thought. "Never, never, before . . . " She began. "Never, never, before . . . " She broke off. Words had no more use for her. She drew the man's hand across her lips—she let it fall. There was nothing to say, nothing to do; she had passed beyond the joy that seeks for utterance, past the passion that bounds itself in a caress. Life lay within life, heart within heart; lips that touch,

hands that hold, tears, words—these were but love's body, as far removed from her love as the walls of the temple from the flame that burns within it.

"We have never lived." The man took up the thread of her speech, of her muteness. "What have we done with all the lost years? How have we squandered our youth—how have we misspent our life-days?"

She shook her head, setting aside the

question. The past for her was not.

"I cannot remember," she smiled. "The arrears are paid." For her, youth, joy, love lay in the hollow of her hand.

He caught the contagion of her supreme oblivion. "Let us make amends for all we have misused," he murmured. And then

for him likewise regret itself died.

The wind-wave had swept them to its very centre, at its centre the woman rested her heart's folded wings. Even wonder had ceased; she held joy as her birthright.

They wandered away down streets that seemed as familiar home-places to their feet. Every window was dark; not a light gleamed across the river, not a lantern shone from the moored boats at the wharfside; the water that lapped their planks flowed under the bridge like a moonstone set in silver. Bending over the bridge parapet, they watched the water as it ran by; sometimes speech came to one or to the other, oftener silence came to both. Far in the east a slow paleness gathered, slowly it gilded itself, slowly the floating haze on the horizon caught at its edge the first tinge of rose, and the first cloud-flake floated, like some red petal of the dawn, across the sky. In the water-mirror the shifting colours repeated themselves, rose hues deepened, shot with flame colours, little winds blew fitfully, scattering the tinted thistledown of daybreak clouds far and wide over the heavens. A stronger breeze planed the opal surface of the ripples into a sheet of polished There was a rustle in the reedbeds, the brown-flowered rushes shook, a bird wakened, then another, and a swift skimmed the water. Night was over, day was at hand.

In each rose-light the whole world's beauty was theirs; in each little wind, the freshness of all past springs; in each drifting scent of clover from the farther bank, the fragrance of all summer's blossoms; in the touch of hand to hand, the gold of all desires.

"What did you pay for it?" the man asked suddenly.

"All life holds," she said.

There was a pause.

"And you?" she spoke at length.

"I? I do not know." His answer lagged.
"I paid——"

"All that you could, dear heart," she ended his broken sentence. "No matter how much, more can no man give."

With one accord they retraced their steps through the still sleeping town, up by the market-place, through the silent streets into

the square.

Swallows were darting about the eaves of the houses, the acacia by the Inn, with its silvered leaves, seemed like a ghost-tree against the grey wall. They turned on the very threshold to look back. The windows of the church were struck by the first sunrays, the ruby light was quenched, the whole building was irradiated by shafts of gold. The sun had risen. A swift shadow, as of an immense fear, clouded the woman's face.

"Oh, my heart's beloved!" she cried.
"We are not dreaming—say we are not

dreaming?"

"Dreaming!" Her companion laughed an untroubled laugh of joy. "Then are dreams life's only worth!"

He drew her across the threshold.

"Come !" he said.

"But the day—the day is here," she murmured.

It was a year ago. Once more the fields were white with corn, August dust lay on the hedgerows, and the scent of honeysuckle and clover filled the air.

Through quiet English lanes a man and a woman were walking side by side. A companion, a lad with keen eyes and restless movements, was with them.

"So you found my lost town among the plains?" he asked with a glance of eager inquiry. "You stayed there?"

"One night," the man answered him.

The lad looked from one to the other.

He laughed shortly.

"I thought so," he said.

Over the man, over the woman, a change had come. They lived life as they had lived it before; yet the man's eyes held memory at bay, in the woman's lay an infinite regret. A dream had passed over them—and was gone!

## THE UNFINISHED GAME.

#### BY BARRY PAIN.



Tanslowe, which is on the Thames, I found just the place that I wanted. I had been born in the hotel business, brought up in it, and made my living at it for thirty years. For the last twenty I had been

both proprietor and manager, and had worked uncommonly hard, for it is personal attention and plenty of it which makes a hotel pay. I might have retired altogether, for I was a bachelor with no claims on me and had made more money than enough; but that was not what I wanted. I wanted a nice, old-fashioned house, not too big, in a nice place with a longish slack season. 1 cared very little whether I made it pay or not. The Regency Hotel at Tanslowe was just the thing for me. It would give me a little to do and not too much. Tanslowe was a village, and though there were two or three public-houses, there was no other hotel in the place, nor was any competition likely to come along. I was particular about that, because my nature is such that competition always sets me fighting, and I cannot rest until the other shop goes down. I had reached a time of life when I did want to rest and did not want any more fighting. It was a free house, and I have always had a partiality for being my own master. It had just the class of trade that I liked-principally gentlefolk taking their pleasure in a holiday on the river. It was very cheap, and I like value for money. The house was comfortable, and had a beautiful garden sloping down to the river. I meant to put in some time in that garden-I have a taste that way.

The place was so cheap that I had my doubts. I wondered if it was flooded when the river rose, if it was dropping to pieces with dry-rot, if the drainage had been condemned, if they were going to start a lunatic asylum next door, or what it was. I went into all these points and a hundred more. I found one or two trifling drawbacks, and one

expects them in any house, however good—especially when it is an old place like the Regency. I found nothing whatever to stop

me from taking the place.

I bought the whole thing, furniture and all, lock, stock, and barrel, and moved in. I brought with me my own head-waiter and my man-cook, Englishmen both of them. knew they would set the thing in the right key. The head-waiter, Silas Goodheart, was just over sixty, with grey hair and a wrinkled face. He was worth more to me than two younger men would have been. He was very precise and rather slow in his movements. He liked bright silver, clean table-linen, and polished glass. Artificial flowers in the vases on his tables would have given him a fit. He handled a decanter of old port as if he loved it—which, as a matter of fact, he did His manner to visitors was a perfect mixture of dignity, respect, and friendliness. If a man did not quite know what he wanted for dinner, Silas had sympathetic and very useful suggestions. He took, I am sure, a real pleasure in seeing people enjoy their luncheon or dinner. Americans loved him, and tipped him out of all proportion. I let him have his own way, even when he gave the thing away.

"Is the coffee all right here?" a

customer asked after a good dinner.

"I cannot recommend it," said Silas. "If I might suggest, sir, we have the Chartreuse

of the old French shipping."

I overheard that, but I said nothing. The coffee was extract, for there was more work than profit in making it good. As it was, that customer went away pleased, and came back again and again, and brought his friends too. Silas was really the only permanent waiter. When we were busy, I got one or two foreigners from London temporarily. Silas soon educated them.

My cook, Timbs, was an honest chap, and understood English fare. He seemed hardly ever to eat, and never sat down to a meal; he lived principally on beer, drank enough of it to frighten you, and was apparently never the worse for it. And a butcher who tried to send him second-quality meat was certain of finding out his mistake.

finding out his mistake.

The only other man I brought with me was young Harry Bryden. He always called me uncle, but as a matter of fact he was no relation of mine. He was the son of an old friend. His parents died when he was seven years old and left him to me, It was about all they had to leave. At this time he was twentytwo, and was making himself useful. There was nothing which he was not willing to do, and he could do most things. He would mark at billiards, and played a good game himself. He had run the kitchen when the cook was away on his holiday. He had driven the station-omnibus when the driver was drunk one night. He understood book-keeping, and when I got a clerk who was a wrong 'un, he was on to him at once, and saved me money. It was my intention to make him take his proper place more when I got to the Regency; for he was to succeed me when I died. He was clever, and not bad-looking in a gipsy-faced kind of way. Nobody is perfect, and Harry was a cigarette-maniac. He began when he was a boy, and I didn't spare the stick when I caught him at it. But nothing I could say or do made any difference; at twenty-two he was old enough and big enough to have his own way, and his way was to smoke cigarettes eternally. He was a bundle of nerves, and got so jumpy sometimes that some people thought he drank, though he had never in his life tasted liquor. He inherited his nerves from his mother, but I dare say the cigarettes made them worse.

I took Harry down with me when I first thought of taking the place. He went over it with me and made a lot of useful suggestions. The old proprietor had died eighteen months before, and the widow had tried to run it for herself and made a mess of it. She had just sense enough to clear out before things got any worse. She was very anxious to go, and I thought that might have been the reason why the price was so low.

The billiard-room was an annexe to the house, with no rooms over it. We were told that it wasn't used once in a twelvemonth, but we took a look at it—we took a look at everything. The room had got a very neglected look about it. I sat down on the platform—tired with so much walking and standing—and Harry whipped the cover off the table. "This was the one they had in the Ark," he said.

There was not a straight cue in the rack, the balls were worn and untrue, the jigger was broken. Harry pointed to the board. "Look at that, uncle," he said. "Noah had made forty-eight; Ham was doing nicely at sixty-six; and then the Flood came and they never finished." From neatness and force of habit he moved over and turned the score back. "You'll have to spend some money here. My word, if they put the whole lot in at a florin, we're swindled."

As we came out Harry gave a shiver. "I wouldn't spend a night in there," he said,

"not for a five-pound note."

His nerves always made me angry. "That's a very silly thing to say," I told him. "Who's going to ask you to sleep in a billiard-room?"

Then he got a bit more practical, and began to calculate how much I should have to spend to make a bright, up-to-date billiard-

room of it. But I was still angry.

"You needn't waste your time on that," I said, "because the place will stop as it is. You heard what Mrs. Parker said—that it wasn't used once in a twelvemonth. I don't want to attract all the loafers in Tanslowe into my house. Their custom's worth nothing, and I'd sooner be without it. Time enough to put that room right if I find my staying visitors want it, and people who've been on the river all day are mostly too tired for a game after dinner."

Harry pointed out that it sometimes rained, and there was the winter to think about. He had always got plenty to say, and what he said now had sense in it. But I never go chopping and changing about, and I had made my mind up. So I told him he had got to learn how to manage the house, and not to waste half his time over the billiard-table. I had a good deal done to the rest of the house in the way of redecorating and improvements, but I never

touched the annexe.

The next time I saw the room was the day after we moved in. I was alone, and I thought it certainly did look a dingy hole as compared with the rest of the house. Then my eye happened to fall on the board, and it still showed sixty-six—forty-eight, as it had done when I entered the room with Harry three months before. I altered the board myself this time. To me it was only a funny coincidence; another game had been played there and had stopped exactly at the same point. But I was glad Harry was not with me, for it was the kind of thing that would have made him jumpier than ever.

It was the summer-time, and we soon had something to do. I had been told that

motor-cars had cut into the river trade a good deal; so I laid myself out for the motorist. Tanslowe was just a nice distance for a run from town before lunch. It was all in the old-fashioned style, but there was plenty of choice and the stuff was good; and my wine-list was worth consideration. Prices were high, but people will pay when they are pleased with the way they are treated. Motorists who had been once came again and sent their friends. Saturday to Monday we had as much as ever we could do, and more than I had ever meant to do. But I am built like that—once I am in a shop, I have got to run it for all it's worth.

I had been there about a month, and it was about the height of our season, when one night, for no reason that I could make out, I couldn't get to sleep. I had turned in, tired enough, at half-past ten, leaving Harry to shut up and see the lights out, and at a quarter-past twelve I was still awake. I thought to myself that a pint of stout and a biscuit might be the cure for that. So I lit my candle and went down to the bar. The gas was out on the staircase and in the passages, and all was quiet. The door into the bar was locked, but I had thought to bring my pass-key with me. I had just drawn my tankard of stout when I heard a sound that made me put the tankard down and listen again.

The billiard-room door was just outside in the passage, and there could not be the least doubt that a game was going on. I could hear the click-click of the balls as plainly as possible. It surprised me a little, but it did not startle me. We had several staying in the house, and I supposed two of them had fancied a game. All the time that I was drinking the stout and munching my biscuit the game went on—click, click-click, click. Everybody has heard the sound hundreds of times standing outside the glass-panelled door of a billiard-room and waiting for the stroke before entering. No other sound is quite like it.

Suddenly the sound ceased. The game was over. I had nothing on but my pyjamas and a pair of slippers, and I thought I would get upstairs again before the players came out. I did not want to stand there shivering and listening to complaints about the table. I locked the bar, and took a glance at the billiard-room door as I was about to pass it. What I saw made me stop short.

The glass panels of the door were as black as my Sunday hat, except where they reflected the light of my candle. The room, then, was not lit up, and people do not play billiards in the dark. After a second or two I tried the handle. The door was locked. It was the only door to the room.

I said to myself: "I'll go on back to bed. It must have been my fancy, and there was

nobody playing billiards at all."

I moved a step away, and then I said to myself again: "I know perfectly well that a game was being played. I'm only making

excuses because I'm in a funk."

That settled it. Having driven myself to it, I moved pretty quickly. I shoved in my pass-key, opened the door, and said: "Anybody there?" in a moderately loud voice that sounded somehow like another man's. I am very much afraid that I should have jumped if there had come any answer to my challenge, but all was silent. I took a look round. The cover was on the table. An old screen was leaning against it; it had been put there to be out of the way. As I moved my candle, the shadows of things slithered across the floor and crept up the walls. I noticed that the windows were properly fastened, and then, as I held my candle high, the marking-board seemed to jump out of the darkness. The score recorded was sixty-six—forty-eight.

I shut the door, locked it again, and went up to my room. I did these things slowly and deliberately, but I was frightened and I was puzzled. One is not at one's best in the

small hours.

The next morning I tackled Silas.

"Silas," I said, "what do you do when gentlemen ask for the billiard-room?"

"Well, sir," said Silas, "I put them off if I can. Mr. Harry directed me to, the place being so much out of order."

"Quite so," I said. "And when you can't

put them off?"

"Then they just try it, sir, and the table puts them off. It's very bad. There's been no game played there since we came."

"Curious," I said. "I thought I heard a

game going on last night."

"I've heard it myself, sir, several times. There being no light in the room, I've put it down to a loose ventilator. The wind

moves it and it clicks."

"That'll be it," I said. Five minutes later I had made sure that there was no loose ventilator in the billiard-room. Besides, the sound of one ball striking another is not quite like any other sound. I also went up to the board and turned the score back, which I had omitted to do the night before. Just then Harry passed the door on his way

from the bar, with a cigarette in his mouth as usual. I called him in.

"Harry," I said, "give me thirty, and I'll play you a hundred up for a sovereign. You can tell one of the girls to fetch our cues from upstairs."

Harry took his cigarette out of his mouth and whistled. "What, uncle!" he said. "Well, you're going it, I don't think. What would you have said to me if I'd asked you

for a game at ten in the morning?"

"Ah!" I said, "but this is all in the way of business. I can't see much wrong with the table, and if I can play on it, then other people may. There's a chance to make a sovereign for you, anyhow. You've given me forty-five and a beating before now."

"No, uncle," he said, "I wouldn't give you thirty. I wouldn't give you one. The table's not playable. Luck would win against

Roberts on it."

He showed me the faults of the thing and said he was busy. So I told him if he liked to lose the chance of making a sovereign, he could.

"I hate that room," he said, as we came out. "It's not too clean, and its smells like

a vault."

"It smells a lot better than your

cigarettes," I said.

For the next six weeks we were all busy, and I gave little thought to the billiard-room. Once or twice I heard old Silas telling a customer that he could not recommend the table, and that the whole room was to be redecorated and refitted as soon as we got the estimates. "You see, sir, we've only been here a little while, and there hasn't been time to get everything as we should like it quite yet."

One day, Mrs. Parker, the woman who had the Regency before me, came down from town to see how we were getting on. I showed the old lady round, pointed out my improvements, and gave her a bit of lunch

in my office.

"Well, now," I said, as she sipped her glass of port afterwards, "I'm not complaining of my bargain, but isn't the billiard-room

a bit queer ? "

"It surprises me," she said, "that you've left it as it is. Especially with everything else going ahead, and the yard half full of motors. I should have taken it all down myself if I'd stopped. That iron roof's nothing but an eyesore, and you might have a couple of beds of geraniums there and improve the look of your front."

"Let's see," I said. "What was the story about that billiard-room?"

"What story do you mean?" she said,

looking at me suspiciously.

"The same one you're thinking of," I said.

"About that man, Josiah Ham?"

"That's it."

"Well, I shouldn't worry about that, if I were you. That was all thirty years ago, and I doubt if there's a soul in Tanslowe knows it now. Best forgotten, I say. Talk of that kind doesn't do a hotel any good. Why, how did you come to hear of it?"

"That's just it," I said. "The man who told me was none too clear. He gave me a hint of it. He was an old commercial passing through, and had known the place in the old days. Let's hear your story, and see if it

agrees with his."

But I had told my fibs to no purpose. The old lady seemed a bit flustered. "If you don't mind, Mr. Sanderson, I'd rather

not speak of it."

I thought I knew what was troubling her. I filled her glass and my own. "Look here," I said. "When you sold the place to me, it was a fair deal. You weren't called upon to go thirty years back, and no reasonable man would expect it. I'm satisfied. Here I am, and here I mean to stop, and twenty billiard-rooms wouldn't drive me away. I'm not complaining. But just as a matter of curiosity, I'd like to hear your story."

"What's your trouble with the room?"

"Nothing to signify. But there's a game played there and marked there—and I can't find the players, and it's never finished. It stops always at sixty-six—forty-eight."

She gave a glance over her shoulder. "Pull the place down," she said. "You can afford to do it, and I couldn't." She finished her port. "I must be going, Mr. Sanderson. There's rain coming on, and I don't want to sit in the train in my wet things. I thought I would just run down to see how you were getting on, and I'm sure I'm glad to see the old place looking up again."

I tried again to get the story out of her, but she ran away from it. She had not got the time, and it was better not to speak of such things. I did not worry her about it

much, as she seemed upset over it.

I saw her across to the station, and just got back in time. The rain came down in torrents. I stood there and watched it, and thought it would do my garden a bit of good. I heard a step behind me and looked round.



"The fat man was gone-gone, as I looked at him, like a flame blown out, vanished into nothing."

A fat chap with a surly face stood there, as if he had just come out of the coffee-room. He was the sort that might be a gentleman and might not.

"Afternoon, sir," I said. "Nasty weather

for motoring."

"It is," he said. "Not that I came in a motor. You the proprietor, Mr. Sanderson?"

"I am," I said. "Came here recently."
"I wonder if there's any chance of a

game of billiards."

"I'm afraid not," I said. "Table's shocking. I'm having it all done up afresh, and then—"

"What's it matter?" said he. "I don't care. It's something to do, and one can't

go out."

"Well," I said, " if that's the case, I'll give you a game, sir. But I'm no flyer at it at the best of times, and I'm all out of practice now."

"I'm no good, myself. No good at all.

And I'd be glad of the game."

At the billiard-room door I told him I'd fetch a couple of decent cues. He nodded and went in.

When I came back with my cue and Harry's, I found the gas lit and the blinds drawn, and he was already knocking the balls about.

"You've been quick, sir," I said, and offered him Harry's cue. But he refused and said he would keep the one he had taken from the rack. Harry would have sworn if he had found that I had lent his cue to a stranger, so I thought that was just as well. Still, it seemed to me that a man who took a twisted cue by preference was not likely to be an expert.

The table was bad, but not so bad as Harry had made out. The luck was all my side. I was fairly ashamed of the flukes I made, one after the other. He said nothing, but gave a short, loud laugh once or twice—it was a nasty-sounding laugh. I was at thirty-seven when he was nine, and I put on eleven more at my next visit and thought I

had left him nothing.

Then the fat man woke up. He got out of his first difficulty, and after that the balls ran right for him. He was a player, too, with plenty of variety and resource, and I could see that I was going to take a licking. When he had reached fifty-one, an unlucky kiss left him an impossible position. But I miscued, and he got going again. He played very, very carefully now, taking a lot more time for consideration than he had done in his previous break. He seemed to have got

excited over it, and breathed hard, as fat men do when they are worked up. He had kept his coat on, and his face shone with perspiration.

At sixty-six he was in trouble again; he walked round to see the exact position, and chalked his cue. I watched him rather eagerly, for I did not like the score. I hoped

he would go on.

His cue slid back to strike, and then dropped with a clatter from his hand. The fat man was gone—gone, as I looked at him, like a flame blown out, vanished into

nothing.

I staggered away from the table. I began to back slowly towards the door, meaning to make a bolt for it. There was a click from the scoring-board, and I saw the thing marked up. And then—I am thankful to say—the billiard-room door opened, and I saw Harry standing there. He was very white and shaky. Somehow, the fact that he was frightened helped to steady me.

"Good Heavens, uncle!" he gasped.
"I've been standing outside. What's the

matter? What's happened?"

"What are you shivering about?" I swished backed the curtain, and sent up the blind with a snap. The rain was over now, and the sun shone in through the wet glass—I was glad of it.

"I thought I heard voices-laughing-

somebody called the score."

I turned out the gas. "Well," I said, "this table's enough to make any man laugh, when it don't make him swear. I've been trying your game of one hand against another, and I dare say I called the score out loud. It's no catch—not even for a wet afternoon. I'm not both-handed, like the apes and Harry Bryden."

Harry is as good with the left hand as the right, and a bit proud of it. I slid my own cue back into its case. Then whistling a bit of a tune, I picked up the stranger's cue, which I did not like to touch. I nearly dropped it again when I saw the initials "J. H." on the butt. "Been trying the

cues," I said, as I put it in the rack.

He looked at me as if he were going to ask more questions. So I put him on to sone hing else. "We've not got enough cover for those motor-cars," I said. "Lucky we hadn't got many here in this rain. There's plenty of room for another shed, and it needn't cost much. Go and see what you can make of it. I'll come out directly, but I've got to talk to that girl in the bar first."

He went off, looking rather ashamed of his tremors.

I had not really very much to say to Miss Hesketh in the bar. I put three fingers of whisky in a glass and told her to put a dash of soda on the top of it. That was all. It was a full-sized drink and did me

good.

Then I found Harry in the yard. He was figuring with pencil on the back of an envelope. He was always pretty smart where there was anything practical to deal with. He had spotted where the shed was to go, and he was finding what it would cost at a rough estimate.

"Well," I said, "if I went on with that idea of mine about the flower-beds, it needn't

cost much beyond the labour."

"What idea?"

"You've got a head like a sieve. Why, carrying on the flower-beds round the front where the billiard-room now stands. If we pulled that down, it would give us all the materials we want for the new motor-shed. The roofing's sound enough, for I was up yesterday looking into it."

"Well, I don't think you mentioned it to

me, but it's a rare good idea."
"I'll think about it," I said.

That evening, my cook, Timbs, told me he'd be sorry to leave me, but he was afraid he'd find the place too slow for him—not enough doing. Then old Silas informed me that he hadn't meant to retire so early, but he wasn't sure—the place was livelier than he had expected, and there would be more

work than he could get through.

I asked no questions. I knew the billiardroom was somehow or other at the bottom of it, and so it turned out. In three days' time the workmen were in the house and bricking up the billiard-room door; and after that Timbs and old Silas found the Regency suited them very well, after all. And it was not just to oblige Harry, or Timbs, or Silas, that I had the alteration That unfinished game was in my mind; I had played it, and wanted never to play it again. It was of no use for me to tell myself that it had all been a delusion, for I knew better. My health was good, and I had no delusions. I had played it with Josiah Ham-with the lost soul of Josiah Ham-and that thought filled me not with fear, but with a feeling of sickness and disgust.

It was two years later that I heard the story of Josiah Ham, and it was not from old Mrs. Parker. An old tramp came into the saloon bar begging, and Miss Hesketh was giving him the rough side of her tongue.

"Nice treatment!" said the old chap.

"Thirty years ago I worked here, and made good money, and was respected, and now it's insults."

And then I struck in. "What did you do here?" I asked.

"Waited at table and marked at billiards."

"Till you took to drink?" I said.

"Till I resigned from a strange circumstance."

I sent him out of the bar, and took him down the garden, saying I'd find him an hour or two's work. "Now, then," I said, as soon as I had got him alone, "what made you leave?"

He looked at me curiously. "I expect you know, sir," he said. "Sixty-six. Un-

finished."

And then he told me of a game played in that old billiard-room on a wet summer afternoon thirty years before. He, the marker, was one of the players. The other man was a commercial traveller, who used the house pretty regularly. "A fat man, ugly-looking, with a nasty laugh. Josiah Ham, his name was. He was at sixty-six when he got himself into a tight place. He moved his ball—did it when he thought I wasn't looking. But I saw it in the glass, and I told him of it. He got very angry. He said he wished he might be struck dead if he ever touched the ball."

The old tramp stopped. "I see," I said.

"They said it was apoplexy. It's known to be dangerous for fat men to get very angry. But I'd had enough of it before long. I cleared out, and so did the rest of the servants."

"Well," I said, "we're not so superstitious nowadays. And what brought you

down in the world?"

"It would have driven any man to it," he said. "And once the habit is formed—well, it's there."

"If you keep off it, I can give you a job

weeding for three days."

He did not want the work. He wanted a shilling, and he got it; and I saw to it that

he did not spend it in my house.

We have got a very nice billiard-room upstairs now. Two new tables and everything ship-shape. You may find Harry there most evenings. It is all right. But I have never taken to billiards again myself.

And where the old billiard-room was, there are flower-beds. The pansies that grow there have got funny markings—like figures.

# THE BLIND GHOST.

### By DORA GREENWELL McCHESNEY.



EN first I went to Stag Court, I thought the story of the ghost only one more artistic touch to complete the old-world charm of the place. It was right and fitting that such a house should have

a haunting story to harmonise with the shadows and subdued gleams of the oak panelling and tarnished Spanish leather of the walls, and the portraits which filled the long West Gallery with a sense of presence, intimate yet remote. As the days passed, however, and I grew familiar with the Jacobean mansion, I began to be troubled because the story was for ever an untold one. My friends had a trick of falling silent when I spoke of the legend, and none would even tell me in what shape or seeming the spectre appeared. One thing I did learn from a chance word: the phantom belonged to the house, not to the family. Stag Court had been owned by Royalists in the time of the Civil War, and had only passed into the hands of the Puritan Knightleys after sequestration. Somehow the fact that the ghost had an older claim on the place than had its living owners wrought strangely on my imagination, till I yielded to a fantastic, half-ashamed desire, and begged to pass a night in the "ghost's room." My friends demurred, but I was resolute. I remember that I even pleaded my nationality, confessed to a touch of that passion for ancient deeds and dreams which besets the American, that instinctive homesickness for the past known only to those in part disinherited.

I prevailed in the end, and found myself one evening sitting alone in the ghost's room, waiting, waiting for what I was sure could not happen. There was nothing gloomy or spectral about the beautiful chamber, though for so many years it had been set apart from all the warm, familiar usages of life. The walls were panelled with intarsia work, delicate inlaying of wood, such as I have seen often in Continental churches, but never,

I think, in a private dwelling. That must have been the whim of some "Englishman Italianate" in the time of James I. or Charles I., returning from his grand tour with his memory full of foreign fancies. The design was curious and intricate: a series of slender arches, within which, piled in deliberate disarray, were weapons, musical instruments, and drinking-vessels. All round the room were repeated these symbols of war, song, and revelry, yet no two panels were exactly alike. The wood used was in varying shades of warm brown and yellow, which responded readily to the gleam of candles on the chimney-piece and table and the glow of the great fire, so that all the room was steeped in a subdued but friendly light. There were no black and sudden shadows, no rustling folds of arras to cheat the mind into credulity and fear.

I drew my chair up beside the heavy table, which I had pushed away from its central position so that I could see the fire more easily. The seat I had chosen was a stiff, high-backed one, uncompromising in its rigidity. I did not intend to fall asleep and let a dream slip unawares among my memories of the night. Before me lay the three books I had brought-a curious assortment-a volume of Gibbon, chosen for its cool and trenchant scepticism as a sort of rebuke to superstition, "The Professor at the Breakfast Table" for companionship, and a new sensational novel of the kind to be read in breathless haste, in case the long, dark hours should weigh on me. I did not open any of them, but sat studying the elaborate intarsia, noting here a lute lying incongruously beside a classical lyre, there a magnificently wrought helmet such as were worn by the Italian condottieri, and observing the admirable perspective of the slender arches which framed the piles of spoil. It seemed grievous to abandon so interesting a room merely for sake of a legendary terror, and just as I was thinking so I turned sharply to look behind me.

There, a few paces away, stood the figure of a man, clearly revealed in the soft, even light; I could see every detail of his dress and bearing, and for a few moments I studied

him in an absorption too utter for fear. He was in the garb of King Charles's cavaliersnot buff coat and corslet, but a suit of some rich, dark stuff, of a purple so deep that it was almost black. He wore no scarf nor sword, and his attire was disordered, the collar of delicate lace a little awry, and one of the long cuffs gone. All this I saw unconsciously, remembering it later, as I observed the fine lines of the figure, even though the man stood bending slightly forward, losing something of his height. At the time I was only aware of the face, a face of singular beauty, set in the stillness of desperate effort or endurance, the wide eyes, amber hued, terribly bright and fixed. They did not meet mine, nor did my strange visitant seem conscious of my nearness. He came forward, very slowly and hesitantly, yet with the tension of concentrated purpose in every faltering movement. Close beside my chair he passed, so near that by reaching out a hand I might have touched his cloak or brushed one of the long locks of chestnut hair falling disordered on his shoulders. I felt sure that I could have touched and felt them, for this form beside me was not shadowy, seemed no imponderable essence, but a spirit which mysteriously had gathered to itself something of human form and Even as the thought formed itself in my mind it was grimly confirmed. The advancing figure had struck sharply against the corner of the table, winced, and drawn aside with a piteous, groping gesture. Realisation struck at my heart in a pang of indescribable compassion and terror: the ghost was blind.

My own eyes grew dim for a moment, and when I could see clearly again, he stood beside the chimney-piece, his face turned from me, passing his hands slowly along the smooth surface of the wall. He appeared to follow a straight line, his seeking fingers keeping always a little above the level of his shoulder, moving backwards and forwards, tirelessly yet wearily, from the chimneypiece to the angle of the wall. As I watched, it came home to me that the same blind, futile search had been made night after night, through all the slowly circling years, since that cavalier who stood there in so gallant yet so forlorn a guise had stood in living flesh, a man among men; that it would still be made without truce or rest till the groping hands had achieved their impossible work. It was not only pity for the darkened spirit which moved me, but a sense of the irrevocable and irremediable which concerned

my own soul no less intimately. For one instant of unendurable agony I looked, as he looked, into a black abyss, and saw there, as it were by an inner sight less tolerable than outer blindness, every sin and error of my life laid bare without hope of retrieval or atonement. In that heart-beat I knew what hell might be: the endless, hopeless effort to undo in the darkness evil wrought in the light.

Time is not in such an experience. It might have been moments or hours that I stared at the figure by the panelling. Then sharp on the stillness sounded the crack of a musket. The cavalier flung up his hands like a man mortally stricken, and

--I was alone.

No one asked me questions the next morning, and for a time I asked questions of none. The impression of the night's horror was too vivid, and I understood why those who had undergone the same ordeal took refuge in silence. But as the gloaming drew on, I found that I could not rest. I was sitting in the library, and Alicia, my friend's youngest daughter, a grave, reticent girl, was in the deep window-seat, bending to catch the last fading light on her book.

"Is nothing known of its story?" I asked abruptly, and did not need to explain of what

I spoke.

Alicia turned where she sat, her face in shadow, a twilight glimmer making a halo of her fair hair, and in a low, troubled voice told me all that was recorded or divined. Not many people saw the ghost, and of those who did none had faced a second night in the haunted room. Nothing had ever been found in that room to account for the apparition; the walls had been vainly searched, by daylight, for traces of a hidden treasure or a secret door. It was believed that the phantom was that of a certain Sir Basil ----, who had been a Royalist officer in the Civil Tradition had much to say of Sir Basil and of his deadly enmity with a lieutenant in his troop, a certain James Howe. Their hostility culminated when a Royalist garrison was betrayed to the Parliamentary soldiers under one Major Sandys, and the suspicion lay most darkly on the two fellowofficers. In the end Howe was convicted of treason, his life spared only that he might be publicly degraded and dismissed from the He enlisted again as a common army. soldier under a feigned name, and, a year later, so the story ran, brought out his enemy,

sorely hurt and unconscious, from the thick of a mêlés. Rescuer and rescued were made prisoners, and confined for a time in Sir Basil's own house of Stag Court, which had been seized and garrisoned for the Parliament. There the tale grew vague and confused; but one thing was certain: when Sir Basil came back to life, he was stone blind from the injury he had received in the fight.

Listening, I had to guess at what must have passed between those two men, fellow-soldiers, fellow-prisoners, mortal enemies, both in their different ways maimed beyond recovery. After a time Howe was released or taken to another prison, while Sir Basil remained, a blind captive in his own house. How, helpless as he was, he escaped from his guarded room was never known, but escape he did, and made his way to the panelled chamber which had been his own. There he was found, and, whether by deliberate intention or in the excitement of pursuit, was shot through the heart.

The gleam of the long English twilight had faded from the library before the story was ended, and I sat silent for a while in the

gloom.

"Howe was my mother's name," I said then irrelevantly. "May I spend another night in the ghost's room?"

If I felt no terror in the actual presence of the phantom on its first coming, I endured a sickness of dread as I waited for its return. I braced myself as if for the assault of bodily pain or peril, sitting stiffly in the big carved chair, gripping its arms with both hands. I made no pretence of reading, though a pile of books lay before me. Everything looked as it had done on my earlier vigil, except that I had pushed the table back to its former place, leaving the way to the chimney-piece free for the passing of that unguided seeker.

Suddenly, in a moment, he was there, moving forward stealthily, one hand outstretched, the beautiful, blind face set and straining. Once again a wave of darkness and horror swept over me, but it ebbed more quickly than before, leaving me forgetful of myself, lost in the sense of another's pain. Perhaps the story I had heard was working in my mind, but it seemed to me rather as though I read by some secret sympathy the thoughts of the tormented spirit beside me, felt the throb of its love and remorse and despair. I knew, though when the intense moment was past I could not explain my knowledge, that

between these two enemies, Sir Basil and his one-time officer, a great and strange friendship had grown in captivity, that for friendship's sake was carried on the desperate, darkling search—for what? Be it what it might, I could no longer endure to watch those delicate hands—such hands as Van Dyck painted—grope patiently along the unrevealing wood. With a girding up of my courage, a pang of passionate sympathy, I rose from my place, lifted a candle, and walked straight towards the wall by which the Royalist's figure yet stood. Shoulder to shoulder with that which was not of earth, I took up the quest which he had made in vain for three hundred years and more. My flesh shrank and cringed, but stronger than my dread was the compulsion of that other's need. Standing there, his anguish entered into me, his love, his remorse—for a sin of which I knew not—his sense of shame and helplessness, and his unswerving resolve to fight down even helplessness and shame. Always his hands moved along the surface of the wall at one level, and where he felt I looked. And there, at the apex of one of the inlaid arches, I saw, under the light of my candle, a tiny disc of slightly darker wood. So small it was as to be scarce visible, while to the touch it was wholly imperceptible. At the sight of it I forgot the terror and mystery which environed me in the sense of discovery. Setting my candle on the chimney-piece, I opened my knife, and pressed the blade hard on the marked spot. No sign at first, then a reluctant groan, and the panel slid a crack aside. I slipped my hand into the aperture, and pressed till the crack widened and a little hidden cabinet lay revealed, holding a handful of papers grey with the dust of generations. With a swimming brain and shaking hand, I drew them out. The dust flew up and blinded me, and the passing dimness of my sight sickened me with a panic. Then the yellowed ink and darkened paper grew clear to me, and I read. First a list of names, then a warrant for taking horses, then one or two documents which seemed to be concerned with lands and revenues. At last a letter, seal and severed silken cord still in place, the few lines of writing damningly plain: final instructions for carrying out the secret surrender already agreed on, addressed to Sir Basil - and signed Ferdinando Sandys.

Sudden loathing of the long-past treachery shook me. Sir Basil, then, had been the traitor and had laid the burden of his guilt on his private enemy. And then, in the revealing darkness and in the spiritual enfranchisement



"Walked straight towards the wall by which the Royalist's figure yet stood."

of captivity, he had come to know and love the man he had undone. What fire of torment must that guilt and that love together have kindled! Small wonder that it had urged him in life, had urged him after death, to that blind, baffled quest for the proof of his own shame and the honour of

the foe that had grown a friend.

Now the proof lay clear in my hand, and I turned to confront the seeking spirit. Close to me he stood, every line of his face distinct, stamped with the agony of his long endurance, his ceaseless, frustrate endeavour. I knew that he felt my presence, heard my movement as one still in the flesh might have done, but could not see what I had found nor whether I understood. The blind eyes were straining towards me in a question, a fear, a desperate incredulous hope, the hope that after generations and centuries there should be laid bare—his own dishonour.

I could find no words at first, could find no voice nor breath : then—

"I have found it!" I cried. "Be at peace!" and I saw light break across the darkened face—but of that light I cannot speak.

Only a student here and there took any interest in the brief note that appeared in two or three antiquarian journals righting a forgotten wrong and establishing the honour of an obscure soldier dead centuries ago. Even I, who know now that I have the blood of that disgraced Royalist in my veins, cannot care passionately for his late acquittal. It is more to me that an ancient enmity and ancient friendship are summed up in peace, that the panelled room at Stag Court is free of its ghostly visitant, and the blind eyes seek no more.



### THE SONG OF THE WANDERER.

THE wind is calling.

The wind of the heath, with the hum of the bee in it,
The wind of the hill, with the voice of the free in it,
The wind of the pines, with the sound of the sea in it,
Calling all wanderers to their wandering.

The dusk is falling.

The dusk of the heath with the plover's cry in it, The dusk of the wood, with the leaves that sigh in it, The dusk of the sea, with white wings that fly in it, Calling all wanderers to their wandering.

Whither? Whither?

Down the road, where the clear stars gleam on it, Through the fern, with the glow-worms' beam on it, Over the stream, where the moon-shadows dream on it, Pass we, road-wanderers on our wandering.

Thither! Thither!

Over the moor, when the lightning plays on it,

Over the sea, with the sunrise blaze on it,

Into the mist, with the last sunrays on it,

Pass we, road-wanderers, on our wandering.

# THE PHANTOM CIRCUS.

#### BY UNA ARTEVELDE TAYLOR.



was Bank Holiday at a watering-place on the South Coast, an August midday of lapis-lazuli skies, blazing sunshine, and glittering, ripple - veined sea. The expanse of dun - yellow sands beneath the slant-

ing cliffs of the wide-winged bay were aswarm with human life; the shadowed space beneath the long, black-planked, whiterailed pier, the eating-stalls, the booths of cheap wares and provisions, dear to the tripper, were thronged. Legions of excursionists were disgorged by steamers which coasted the shores; files of holidaymakers passed through the pier toll-gates to picnic in the shade of the lines of bathingmachines; boys, girls, babies, in troops; bathers, boaters, hordes of tourists, contingents of nursery maids, peopled the beach. Entertainments to suit all ages, tastes, and conditions of life abounded. Punch and Judy, niggers, acrobats, open-air preachers, bade for popularity. Wares temporal and wares spiritual were exposed in all their sordid cheapness as the morning hours passed.

At noon a general exodus took place. Children sauntered up landwards from the water's edge; knots of fishermen, red-capped, blue-jerseyed, loitered about the pier-head; the eating-stalls were momentarily deserted by their younger clients. An idle expectancy held the adults on the watch, while a wave of excitement spread amongst the children. The big circus, the "Monster Show," advertised by flaring placards on every hoarding throughout the sea-town, was announced to parade the principal thoroughfares at noon, and already the thud of distant drum-beats, the truculent blare of brass instruments, made themselves audible to attentive ears.

The high-road skirted the cliffs, ascending steeply to east and to west, but at the pierhead, between hill and hill, was a wide semicircular, level space, and here the spectacle of the circus procession might be seen to best advantage in all its fantastic incongruities, its sham barbaric glitter, its counterfeit of Eastern trappings, its bedraggled braveries and tarnished finery—a medley of the music-hall and the backwoods, with its vague suggestions of adventure, and its puerile reminiscences of pantomime burlesque.

A stir and then a hush amongst the waiting crowd. An outrider in scarlet appeared upon the eastern slope of the road -a second-a third-the advance guard to the main body. Soon the lumbering train of vans, gilt and painted, shaped like colossal toys from a shop-window, veered into sight. The tired horses were thrown sharply back on their haunches as they essayed the steep descent; the rough grooms who walked beside whipped them up to a quick trot as they approached the level ground, calling a halt on the opposite ascent while the more laggard waggons retrieved their place in the straggling, single-file march, to proceed with slackening pace towards the inland-lying quarters of the town.

One by one, in the rear of the vans, the dramatis personæ of the show made their appearance, whether their species were man or beast. Piebald ponies, streaked and speckled horses, some led, caparisoned and prancing, some saddled, some harnessed, passed by. The riders were tanned and dusty, with the nervous, hardy, alert faces appertaining to the vagrant circus-performing A clown on stilts took his stand at the centre of the semicircle, advertising in loud speech the characters of his costumed comrades, joking noisily with the nearer bystanders, claiming here and there an old acquaintance. The circus was an annual visitor to the locality, and Jim Drake had many a friend amongst the townsfolk. Erratic tandems, driven by girls in tawdry fancy dress, masked in paint and powder, followed the lead of the "lady rider," in habit and hat. The performing elephant plodded after, a quartette of camels behind, with blue - beaded, red - leather trappings, mangy, pitiful, and morose. There was again a pause and a longer break in the train, while at the top of the hill the men

adjusted extra drag-chains to the ponderous cage on wheels, where, in black evening dress, the lion-tamer sat at one end, his captive beasts, restless, savage, cowed, and half drugged, occupying the other half of the vehicle.

There was a sudden access of interest amongst the bystanders as, at the steepest dip of the hill, one of the drags gave way. The sharp jerk threw the beast inmates within the iron bars into close proximity to the human—there was no partition between. The clown, watching, sprang off his stilts and ran up the hill—the tamer was old Hudson, his friend. The faces of the circus attendants, who knew the peril, changed; the crowd, who half knew, laughed—the brutalities of ignorance are immense.

A moment later the incident was forgotten; the drags were readjusted, the van drove heavily on. A new attraction diverted the attention of the spectators, for next in order came the sharpshooter, Daly, who, after other cowboy exploits, shot an apple from his wife's head at the close of each performance. He was mounted on a roan, rode in a high Spanish saddle, wore a slouched sombrero, and his gun was slung over his shoulders. A faint cheer greeted him; like Drake, he was a familiar figure to annual frequenters of the watering-place. His wife, in boy's dress, fair-haired, with peaked white face and spangled green tunic, drove a miniature Cinderella car in front of the team of dwarf ponies who brought up the rear. procession closed with the cumbrous bandcar, drawn by cream-coloured horses and hung with coloured balls, on which, at a giddy height, the Queen of the Arena was enthroned in glittering and precarious state, with the sparkling tinsel of her crown and the dyed yellow of her hair.

So the display—sordid, gaudy, vulgar—passed by, and, mingling unseen with the living figures of the coloured pageantry, Death, on his lean horse, held the hour-glass behind the gaily-bedizened car of the wire-walker, beckoned with outstretched hand to the lion-tamer seated in his ambulant cage, and touched with warning finger the shoulder of the gymnast. And the crowd, though blind, was dimly conscious that that sinister spectre lurked amidst the gaily-accounted pageant—the consciousness lent excitement to the show. It was a scene in the Danse Macabre which mediævalism omitted to portray.

The last string of ponics, the battering of the drum-beats, the discordant uproar of the brass, receded further and further into the distance. Children, trippers, loiterers, dispersed to eat, drink, and make merry, after the manner of the excursionist, while the circus pitched its tents on the campingground, where waste moorlands of heather and gorse and bramble fringed the squalid suburbs of seaside villadom.

#### 11.

IT was late afternoon. Daly, the sharpshooter, alias the New William Tell, stood at the open door of a workmen's lodginghouse, one of the slate-roofed line of cottages recently erected along the moorland highroad skirting the circus encampment. Mrs. Daly lodged there, eschewing the rough accommodation and rougher companionship of the caravanserai. It was the last concession to forfeited gentility. Poor little Nellie-vain, pretty, shallow-had sought six years ago to better her condition. A school-teacher in the village school, she had married the "gentleman born," who, in those bygone days, played lovers' parts in travelling companies, and won -the zest of clandestine meetings contributing to illusion-Nellie, the parish Cinderella, to follow his fortunes. She never loved him—that he learnt soon enough. "But now we must sink or swim together," Daly had laughed, with the cheerful acquiescence in destiny of a kindly reprobate.

They sank, and sank rapidly. The circus was the last stage of Daly's descent in the social scale. Theatre, music-hall, circus; the ladder on whose rung Nellie had set her feet led downwards. Nellie herself was called upon to share what she called his disgrace. Minnie, the girl-rider, who played with Daly the New William Tell "act" in the shooting scene of each daily performance, had struck. Daly drank, and drank hard. It was not safe for anyone, so Minnie, Jim Drake's sweetheart, declared, and Jim stood by her in the dispute with the manager. "Then Mrs. Daly shall do it herself," the manager decreed; "then, perhaps, she'll keep him sober," else "Daly might go."

So it was that Nellie must take her rank with the girl-riders and the rest of the circus folk, and only in the matter of lodging could she assert any distinction. It was a bitter pill, and it rankled sorely, but "one must live," Nellie said to herself. It is a superstitious belief in a superfluous necessity shared by many others in divers straits.

Daly had kept sober for many a week

since. He had the merit of his vices. He was kindly and generous, light-minded and worthless spendthrift as he was. Nellie was ill-tempered, fretful. Her ill-temper was born of the relics of self-respect; regret for past gentility envenomed her life and embittered her tongue. Her cheeks were

thin, her face peaked, her features sharpened — for Nellie's youth had died young - but Daly was fond of her still. More, he loved her, if intermittently, with something strangely like a lover's fond-The world ness. had been hard for Nellie: a worse woman would have fared better-would have found consolations Nellie despised. With a contrition. selfish in which he found satisfaction, he was sorry for her unhappiness; he was sorry for his share in it. All he could do now for her welfare was, when occasion demanded it, to keep sober. It was nervous work, that shooting scene, for a woman unused to it.

He tried sobriety, but the weather was scorching, the roads long and thick with dust. When he came round, an hour after the afternoon performance, she had given him one look of disgust, and then turned away.

He lingered on uneasily; he knew his hand had been shaky that afternoon, and he knew she knew it.

"Don't sulk, Nell," he said. "It's all right." If she heard, she gave no sign. "I'll be all right this evening," he went on shamefacedly. "I won't take any more.

Come, Nell; the air's like a furnace. Come and stroll around till we're wanted."

He waited a moment, came a step nearer, made a half move to lay his hand on her shoulder. She jerked it aside.

"I say, drop that stitching," he repeated,

"and come along."



"It's not safe; there'll be an accident."

She shook her head. She was arranging her tarnished tinsels for the night's show. A woman's vanity has many qualities of the eternal.

"Someone must do the work," she muttered surlily.

Daly laughed.

"Very well, then, I'm off; but I'll keep

sober, I promise you."

Daly strolled away, leaving Nellie to her tinsels. "I promise!" Poor promises!

Dieu dispose.

Two hours later, Nellie was waiting her "turn" in the tent that served for greenroom. Someone came to the door and called her by name. It was the manager.

"Mrs. Daly, your husband's drunk again! Jim says he's as bad as ever—clean drunk, I

tell you."

"He's not!" Nellie came forward, sullen

and angry.

"Well, I suppose you know. It's your

look-out, anyway."

The audience was waiting, the manager was in a temper. "It's you who will suffer if anything goes wrong."

"He's not drunk, I tell you," Nellie

repeated defiantly.

" All right, then. Hurry up; you're late.

Time's just up." The manager went.

There was still a few minutes' delay. Daly was shooting at glass balls; Nellie could hear the applause, and, between clapping and clapping, the clink of bullets upon the glass.

A girl-rider, who had been jumping

through paper rings, ran in hurriedly.

"Why, Mrs. Daly, you aren't going on to-night?" she asked. It was Minnie, whose place Nellie was occupying, "Daly's worse than ever; he's shooting like mad. It's not safe; there'll be an accident."

"That's my business. Clear out!" Nellie

answered shortly. "I'm wanted."

She pushed past the girl.

"Who'd have thought she had so much grit?" Minnie, unresentful of the repulse, murmured to herself, looking after her with something of admiration.

"Makes you nervous to see." Jim, the clown, had joined her. "But then, poor old Daly, he'll pull himself together, you bet. He's that proud of Nellie—and fond, too."

Nellie took her stand in the big round tent. Daly had shot straight, drunk and sober, times out of number. Why not to-

night—why not?

She lifted the gilt apple, showed her teeth; they were white and even between the red paint of her lips as she smiled the set smile of music-hall convention to the audience. Even now she was pretty in her slimness and fair-haired grace. The audience cheered, and Nellie straightened her figure as she balanced the apple on her head. The band played its loudest, the drum beat the rhythm.

Daly, on horseback, entered at a gallop. The well-trained beast knew its work; it stopped dead short at a given spot; the band stopped playing. Daly threw himself off the saddle. Nellie's quick eyes saw that he staggered slightly as he took a step forward. He lifted his gun mechanically, paused, looked vacantly round, and reached out a hand to steady himself against the motionless horse. Someone laughed a loud grating laugh. Still Daly hesitated. A voice from the crowd called "Fire away, old boy!" and there was a hiss. Nellie heard it all—the laugh, the voice, the hiss.

What was Daly waiting for? The gaslights flickered in her eyes. He was taking aim at last, his hand was on the trigger. Was it the gas that was blown to and fro in the draught of the windy night, or did she see his hand shake? No-yes! He aimed-he was aiming too low! Dazed with terror, she gathered herself together to spring aside. It was too late! A sharp report, a cloud of grey smoke, the smell of burnt powder, a woman's scream. The gilt apple rolled from the square of carpet and sank in the sand. Nellie had fallen. A burst of applause filled the tent; the audience shouted, they clamoured for an Then came a moment's questioning; an instinct of disaster spread. Nellie did not stir. Daly stood a moment rigid. Then he had dropped his gun and was bending over her. Was it part of the play? If so, it was played to the life. There was a murmur, a hum of voices, the inarticulate murmur of curiosity. Suddenly the word "accident" passed from mouth to mouth. They lifted Nellie from the sand, and Daly stood by in horror. The spectators had seen the last of the play.

The lean rider had taken his part in the show. Living is, after all, the embryo of

dying-break the shell and see.

. . . . .

They carried Nellie to the nearest van, and laid her on the mattress hastily stretched from seat to seat within. The green tunic was stained, the fair hair disordered, her face was ghastly under its rouge. Men and girls gathered in groups about the doorway stair; horses were tethered around. Within, Daly crouched on the floor by her side. There was a stir; a doctor, hastily summoned, arrived, the manager with him.

"I warned her; she wouldn't listen. I told her he was drunk." The manager

vociferated excuse and explanation.

Jim, the clown, leaned against the off-

Minnie was speaking to a circle of wheel. listeners.

"She wouldn't listen," the girl was repeating with excited importance. "I was the last to speak to her. She was always that proud—she'd listen to no one!"

"It was sheer murder, it was, to shoot when he was that drunk!" a man said

hoarsely.

"Shut up!" The clown turned angrily on the two. "You shut up, both of you! It

will go hard with him, anyhow."

The manager and the doctor mounted the short steps. The doctor went in, the manager stood at the entrance. Nellie opened her blue eyes, and turned them slowly under their half-closed lids till they rested on Daly's bent head. There was a hush without and within. The bystanders strained their cars to catch what passed.

"He was drunk-I warned her he was drunk!" The manager's voice penetrated Nellie's semi-consciousness. A gleam of intelligence revived, for a moment the haze of death lifted. The dying woman raised herself painfully, with gasping breath, from

the propped-up pillow.

"He wasn't!" she whispered, and in the silence the hoarse, loud whisper reached even the watchers without. "He wasn't! I moved!"

The bracken had sprung, summer by summer, the heather and gorse had blossomed, over the trampled enclosure where Nellie played the last scene of her meagre little life. Where the circus pitched its tents, and the tethered horses browsed, new houses in raw and red-bricked hideousness defaced the moorland. Only a nameless grave in the common cemetery remained to tell of the

soon-forgotten incident.

Again it was August. The steamer's strident scream was heard at the pier-head; tourists in yet denser swarms populated the sea-town; children dug, bathed, shouted, and ate on the shore; the sands were alive with the human insect. As the feeding hour approached, the various shore and sand entertainments were suspended. The dog Toby, neck-frill unloosed, was seated near the box where Judy and her fellow-puppets reposed from their labours. The prayer-meeting had quavered forth its last hymn, and the troops of men, women, children, nursery maids, plodded up through the heavy sand from the water's edge. There was the tension of storm to come in the breathless, heated air; the glaring blue of sky and sea was yellowed over with a

hot haze; the flat water lapped almost inaudibly against the seaweeded spars of the pier as the tide receded to its farthest limit.

Near the white railings that flank the toll-gate, a couple of strolling acrobate, a man and a younger performer, little more than a boy, were resting from their arduous toil of entertaining the idle. The boy, his close-cropped head reposing on a red roll of carpet, lay half asleep, lean and tanned. But his sleep was like the sleep of a watch-dog; he caught every word of the talk when the elder man addressed his companion, a brownfaced woman, whose sturdy figure, weatherbeaten skin, and some nameless quality of feature and movement, betokened that she, too, belonged to the wandering confraternity of road-farers.

"First time I've been here since," the man was saying. "Poor Daly! Wonder what's happened to him? Drunk himself sober at last, maybe, as old Hudson the liontamer said when Dick Smith broke his neck off the wire. D'you remember, Minnie? I knew something was going to happen; that very morning I told Dick he'd better look to the wire."

"You was always imagining things was going to happen," anwered Minnie, ex-rider of the Circus, contemptuously.

Jim Drake took no notice of her interrup-

tion.

"D'you remember Daly? Poor chap! It was rough on the little woman he married; she never held up her head after he took to drink."

"Guess she drove him to it! She was a stuck-up piece of trumpery!" said Minnie sharply.

"What's it all about?" asked the boy, his eyes blinking under their white lids set

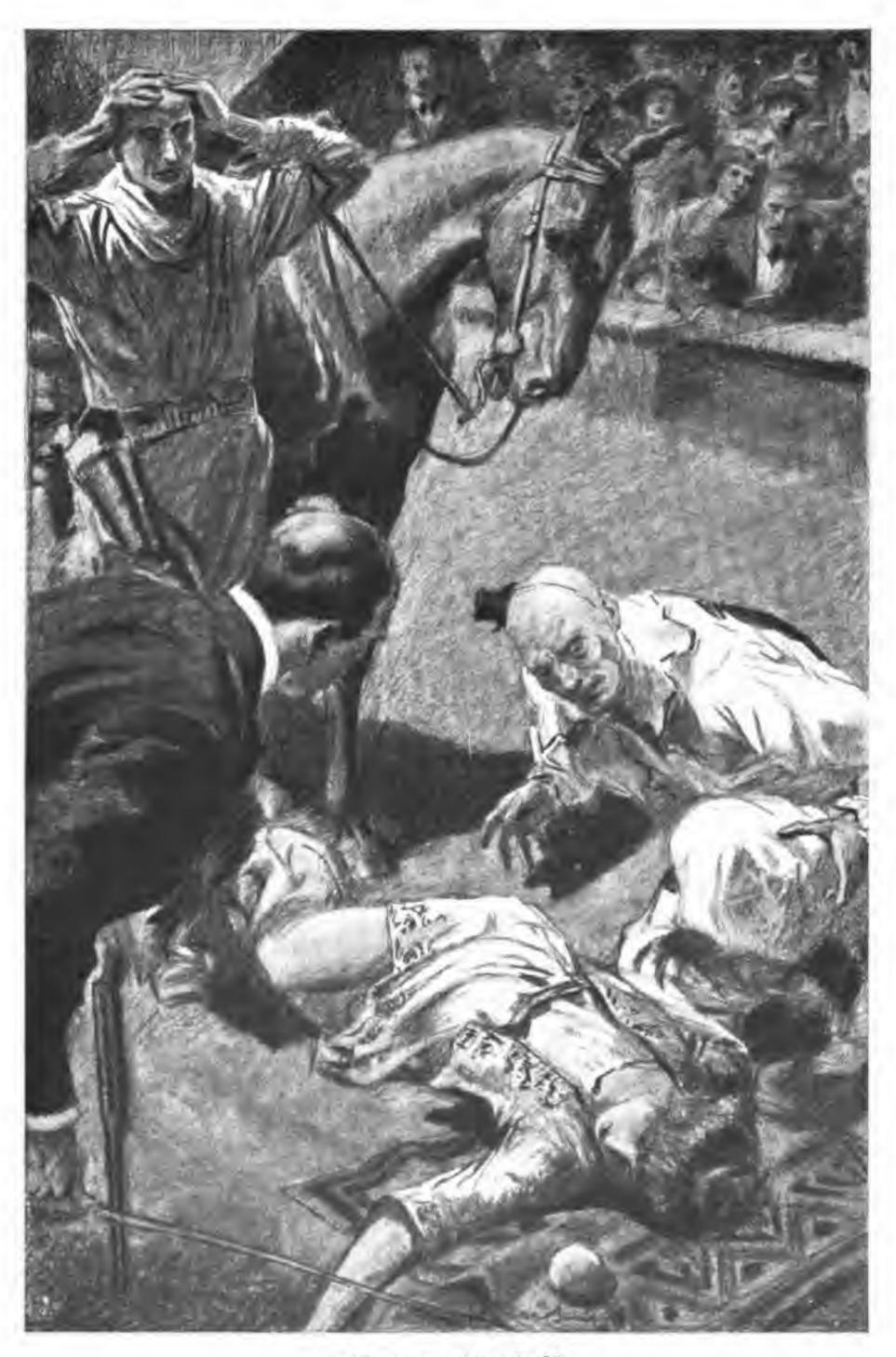
in the brown of his face.

"Old circus days, sonnie, when Minnie and me was in the Circus. Might have been yesterday." The man maundered on; he had but lately resorted to the taproom at the big white hotel at the foot of the hill. "Poor Daly! He took it hard, did Daly."

"You're as bad as Daly," observed Minnie,

with an indifference born of habitude.

"Hang it," the man said, "I'm not for shooting jobs!" Then his mind strayed back to his broken train of reminiscences. "It's just as if it was yesterday—the old band banging away the same tune it played when she came on for her turn. How she looked! Anyone could see death on her. I knew it was coming, I did, just as when



"Was it part of the play?"

Dick broke his neck-I see'd death on her."

The acrobat's hard-lined face, with the hardy grey eyes, alert for all his drinking, had taken a new expression; he was gazing intently up the eastward high-road. gave a sudden start, with a smothered oath.

"Look!" he said suddenly.

that?"

"What? What's the matter?" said the startled woman.

"Hallo, what's up?" asked the lad, roused.

Jim was staring -stupidly.rigidly staring his eyes were blank and fixed.

"I say, are you gone blind?" Minnie ex-

claimed.

"Look-look! There's the old show itself!" Jim cried, catching her by the arm. He gripped her wrist like a vice. "Look alive, Minnie! There they come! There's the old piebald, and Will Godden's team. Heavens, he'll run down those perambulators if they don't run! Here, sonnie, up with you! Here's the whole blessed show a-coming along!"

The boy, his jersey rolled back to the elbows above the blue tattooing of his arms, sprang to his feet. "Where? Which way?"

he said.

"Jim, let go; you're out of your senses!" The woman's voice, raised in angry altercation, caught the ear of the bystanders. Two or three sailors gathered round, people turned

"There's nothing there, Jim-nothing."

Jim never moved his gaze.

"There's Jennie Deans driving," he went on, with deeper absorption, but lowered voice, "and old Solomon, lame as ever and his trunk all awry, and Fitzgerald himself, bossing it all, and there's old Hudson in his cage—there, on the top of the hill——"

The crowd round thickened.

"What's up?" one asked another.

Jim's voice had sunk to a monotonous undertone. "Why the devil don't the band dry response as she passed in to her work.

play them up? How slow they come! It's like—it's like a funeral!"

Again a man near spoke.

"It's only a drunken mountebank. Says there's a circus coming down the road, hung with black trappings and a hearse alongside."

But some contagion of oppression, a nightmare of vague disquiet, had crept over the nearest bystanders. No one responded to the jest.

"I say, Jim, come out of that." An old acquaintance touched him on the shoulder.

"Don't go on staring at nothing."

"There's Daly riding the roan, and-

Heavens, there's his wife behind!"

The man's face was strained with terror. Minnie felt his grasp relax. She slunk frightened and tearful to the boy's side.

Suddenly Jim made a swift step forward. "The drag's broke on the lion van!" he

shouted. "Hudson'll be done for!"

Involuntarily the circle of spectators had made way. But with the movement Jim paused. A blank look of utter bewilderment succeeded to the tense gaze. He looked to right and to left. With a muttered exclamation he staggered back to the rails.

"But it was there! I saw it-I saw it," he murmured, "and it's gone-clean gone!"

In Ward B of the great London hospital, the midday August sun scarcely penetrated the dense atmosphere of the yellow summer fog. The heat was stifling, the flowers on the central table withered. Doors and windows stood wide open, but no breath of air entered. Two or three nurses stood at the entrance of the ward as the ward sister went by.

"Poor old Daly's gone at last." One of the nurses stopped her. "Off his head, as usualfancied he was riding with a circus caravan, called out the drag-chain was off the lions'

van."

" It was himself wanted the drag-chain in his day, I'll be thinking," was the sister's

## ELEGY.

AUREL and rosemary Over your tomb,

Roses imperial

Weep through the gloom;

Fame be your portion,

Remembrance and love,

Laurel and rosemary,

Roses above.

SYDNEY MARTIN.

## THE SARGASSO SEA.

### By JUSTUS MILES FORMAN,

Author of "The Garden of Lies," "The Quest," "The Unknown Lady," etc.



make anything like a proper, coherent tale of this extraordinary business, I must piece together, as if it were for a patchwork quilt, odds and ends and ill-related fragments that I have got from many

sources. Part of the story I had from Sol Saradine, the Jew who wears gold earrings, and was Drury's mate on both voyages, part I had from the log of the Aula, part from Drury's diary, which he called his private log, other parts from certain neighbours of Margaret Inch at Fairford, and the rest I have had to fill in from imagination, though that is but stray bits here and thereconnecting links, if you like.

Still, I mean to give you, as well as I can, all the essentials, holding back nothing that matters, save one thing—the bearings of that spot, away to the south in the Sargasso Sea, where two bare masts slant up above the heaving weed, and a fortune lies below. The latitude and longitude of that infinitesimal speck upon the waste are known to me, and will never, I think, be forgotten, but I have promised Sol Saradine that no one else shall know them, and no one else ever shall. That I swear.

Those drowned doubloons have done harm

enough already.

After an absence of twenty years, during which time he had sailed all the seas of this world, and traded in most of the ports thereof, Abner Drury came back to Fairford, the sleepy fishing village of his birth. He came standing upon the white deck of the big schooner Aida-but he pronounced it "Ada" -of which he was master and owner, for he had prospered in these twenty years; and he had in his pocket a chart, hand-drawn on parchment, annotated in several different scripts, both Spanish and English. It looked very much like other buried treasure charts, even to the age-browned ink and the occasional

rusty spots that might have been bloodstains; and the bearings set down in one corner of the parchment were the latitude and longitude of a theoretical pin-point in

the Sargasse Sea.

Drury came to Fairford like Diogenes, looking for an honest man, only, more exigent than the Greek cynic, he wanted two men instead of one. To be plain, there is reason to believe he expected to find his nephew, young Piers Drury, whom he had never seen, but whom he knew to have adopted the profession of diver; and, further, he wanted a mate who should be at once intelligent, trustworthy, and acquainted with gasoline propulsion, for the Aida was equipped with an auxiliary engine.

This paragon he discovered almost at once in Sol Saradine, the Jew who wore gold earrings; but young Piers, who, contrary to his uncle's expectation, did not live in Fairford, but out Gloucester way, was busy about his own work, and couldn't turn up

for ten days.

On the second day, Drury seems to have made an important discovery. A girl-child whom he quite possibly may have seen toddling about Fairford twenty years before had grown to womanhood. Drury saw her leaning over the gate of her front garden, stopped to stare, and presently asked one of her neighbours who she was.

I have seen a photograph of Margaret Inch taken by an itinerant "artist," which, judging from supplementary verbal description, I believe to have been a ghastly libel. Still, not even the best efforts of this wandering criminal could quite disguise the girl's grave beauty. I don't wonder Abner Drury stopped to stare, not though he was past forty, and reckoned a hard man. I know little about his early life, but I have never heard that women had any part in it, and it is my guess that they never had.

In any case, the middle-aged sailor seems to have been, as the phrase goes, "hard hit," and to have made no effort to disguise it.

The girl's part in this suddenly initiated romance is less easy to reconstruct. She was, they tell me, very gentle and sweet, tender with children, an angel of mercy in the sickroom, universally beloved, but incredibly silent about her own thoughts and affairs. She was alone in the world, her father having been lost at sea long back, and her mother dead these two years-no brothers, no sisters. So, as you see, it is little I know of Miss Inch's feelings towards Abner Drury at this period, save that she certainly allowed him to spend a great deal of his time in her fragrant garden, where the pinks and sweet-williams and mignonette and larkspurs grew, or on the shady porch of the little house, whence, looking down the green hill, you saw the masts of the fishing-boats in the harbour, and the Aula among them.

He can hardly have been, I should think, the figure to evoke romantic fancies in a maid—a square, middle-aged man, with a square face and a scrubby beard that was beginning to grey. He had no humour at all, and I was going to say no imagination, but I take that back. Unimaginative men do not go a-seeking Spanish treasure. Also, I mind what Sol Saradine said of him—that Drury was a species of volcano—what he really said was "sleeping dog"— and when roused was terrific. I think women scent that sort of thing in men, and like it, on the ground that it promises excitement, and generally fulfils its promise.

On the tenth day, young Piers Drury turned up in answer to his uncle's summons, and on the fourteenth the Aida set sail for the south. Four days is a brief period of time, but in a far briefer there may be, as Sol Saradine says, "the devil to pay."

And yet there can never have been a more innocent trouble-maker. A big, fair lad young Piers was, with yellow hair and blue eyes, a few freckles across the bridge of his straight nose, the thick neck and large arms of a gladiator—a little vain of his strength, he seems to have been, and given to showing it off in feats—a sunny smile for everybody, and the heart of a child. The boy wouldn't consciously have hurt an earth-worm, but before he had been twelve hours in Fairford he was leaning across Margaret Inch's garden gate. His uncle saw him there, looked black, and passed by.

Now, it is certain that no living soul will ever know exactly what passed between this young woman and these two men during the four days prior to the Aida's departure. That Miss Inch continued to see a good deal of Cap'n Drury is well established, and it is no secret that young Piers was often in her

sweet garden also, but never the two together. It is impossible to acquit the girl of coquetry in some degree, and I shall not try; but that there was any harm in her, or that she realised what she was stirring up with her inexperienced little finger, I, for my

part, refuse to believe.

Her leave-taking from Drury Cap'n Salisbury's wife blundered in upon, and described afterwards as featureless. The two shook hands, Margaret Inch wished Drury good luck and a safe return, and Drury thanked her. Following that, he glowered upon the girl hungrily for a space, made as if to say more, but turned with an abrupt movement and went away.

Whatever that unuttered speech was, he seems to have thought it would "keep."

But very late that evening a next-door neighbour, descending into her back-garden for some obscure reason, glanced across the top of the low party-wall, and saw two rapt young people a-kissing in the moonlight.

At break of day the Aula set sail for the mysterious Sargasso Sea and the sunken

galleon there.

It seems they encountered foul weather three or four days out, and put into Savannah to let the storm blow over. And once again they made port—at Nassau—but this time by intention, to take on water and fresh provisions. Drury's private log proving featureless, I have asked Sol Saradine about the two men's behaviour during this early part of the voyage, and he says that young Piers was his habitual gay and cheery and light-hearted self, but that the skipper seemed gloomy, and held himself apart. He unbent only of an evening, when the three sat in the cuddy with their heads bowed over the parchment chart. The Jew says he often left the other two together there, poring over that yellow document, when he went on deck to stand his watch.

It was, I believe, almost immediately after the Aida left the Bahaman coast that young Piers fell ill with a fever. Drury was at first for turning back; but the lad protested loudly, and the attack looked a very light one—as, indeed, it turned out to be—so in the end they held their course, and fed their invalid with quinine, and came presently to the margin of that heaving swamp—the tract of mystery and death, the grave of ships.

Here the Aida furled her wings, and, under bare poles, with the little auxiliary engine coughing and spluttering, the treasure-seekers turned their backs upon blue water, and wound their tortuous way into the Sargasso Sea.

Twice in that dreary waste they passed derelicts—wooden ships, dismasted, whitened, weed-hung, surrounded by masses of vegetation, so that they were the centres of insecure islands, roosting-places for sea-fowl—and often they saw wreckage, spars, or planks, or a waterlogged boat. The wind died, and it was fiercely hot. Young Piers complained of it, tossing on his cot under the deck awning, but he grew better even in that tropical furnace glare, and it was plain that in a week's time he would be quite himself again.

So they came, under Abner Drury's careful guidance—for he had already been there without a diver, to make sure—to the spot where the two bare masts of an earlier and unfortunate seeker slanted up above the heaving weed, and they dropped anchor.

The invalid wasn't strong enough to dive at once, or so his uncle, against young Piers's protests, decided, and they waited three days in the merciless, still heat. Then he went down to explore, found nothing in the dense undersea forest, tried again, working inward in concentric circles, and at the end of the second day made out the galleon lying in three fathoms of water, and rent asunder by what appeared to have been a dynamite blast. The earlier seekers, whose schooner canted a few yards apart, had made his labours easier for him. He brought up with him in his pouch a handful of doubloons -no, they were pieces-of-eight; one of them lies before me now as I write—and the work was over for the day.

Sol Saradine says the three of them, who berthed aft, drank champagne with their dinner, and that young Piers, being still pretty weak, got a trifle tipsy.

That night Abner Drury saw red.

What occurred I transcribe in his own words from the "private log," which he always kept locked away, and which had, written on the cover of it: "To be read only after my death."

How in the world a sane man could commit the incredible, the fantastic folly of putting such a confession into written words, when he meant to keep it a secret for the remainder of his life, I know no more than you. It is beyond me.

The entry in the private log seems to have been made on the day following the event.

It begins-

" June, 28, -02.

"Last night, the devil having entered into me, his black angels standing round about,

and God being absent, I, in a fit of passion, slew my nephew, my brother Jonadab's son, Piers Drury, by throttling him with my hands, he being weak from fever and tipsy from drink, and so not able to defend himself. Nobody saw what I done, for the crew were below in their bunks, and the look-out asleep at the other end of the deck.

"And when he was dead, I put the body overside, and it sank, the face looking up

at me.

"He had a locket round about his neck, hung on a cord. I saw it for the first time, and asked what it was. It was Margaret Inch's likeness.

"I asked him by what right he wore her likeness, and he laughed at me, telling me they loved each other. Then I heard a rushing wind, and saw a red haze with bright stars shooting through it, and I done what I done.

"His face looked up at me in the moon-

light before he sank out of sight.

"So I have committed murder in black passion, and my soul will be damned for it eternally, and I shall burn in hell. But not yet awhile. Give me first ten years of life, Lord, or five, or two, or even one, and Margaret Inch with me, and I hereby promise not to complain...So be it....Amen!"

Sol Saradine says that, when he went to the skipper's bunk early the next morning, and told him that young Piers could not be found, he had to wake the man from a sleep so sound that it was like a stupor.

It was a species of stupor, I fancy, for, in so far as I can learn, he never slept soundly

again to the very end of his life.

By an odd coincidence, it was Cap'n Salisbury's wife who, a month later, witnessed the first encounter between Margaret Inch and Drury on the morning of the Aida's return to Fairford. She says she had gone over to Miss Inch's house to diagnose, out of her wealth of knowledge, an illness which had befallen the campanulas in the front garden. (The symptoms indicated too much moisture and a lack of sun.)

A fisherman passing up the leafy street called in to the two women that Cap'n Drury's Aïda—" Ada"—had anchored in the harbour half an hour back, and, as the two women stood at the front gate, Drury himself hove in sight, mounting the hill.

Ignoring the elder, he spoke a "Good morning" to Margaret Inch, who greeted him with pink cheeks and a shortened breath, but looked over his shoulder down the hill. She asked if he had brought back the Spanish treasure to dazzle Fairford with, and Drury, in a heavy voice, said "No."

The girl continued to look over his shoulder, and presently, when he did not

speak again, she asked—

"Where is your nephew Piers?"

Still Captain Drury did not speak, and

she asked again--

"Where is he?" Drury's eyes must have told her, for Margaret Inch gave a dreadful scream and clapped her two hands up over her mouth. Young Piers's murderer bent upon the girl such a look, says Mrs. Salisbury, "as I never see before and hope never to again," turned abruptly, and walked away.

That would seem, more or less naturally, to be the end of Abner Drury's wooing, but it wasn't—not by a good deal. He was a determined and, from what we already know, I may well say desperate man. It was his way to get what he wanted, though, to be sure, he failed to bring back the Spanish treasure; it always had been his way. He had returned to Fairford late in August. On the eve of All Souls—or, in other words, the 31st of October—he was married to Margaret Inch, spinster, and the two took up their residence in his wife's home.

Sol Saradine, who was present at the wedding, says that the bridegroom's face was as white as new sail-cloth, and that he had grown noticeably thinner within the past three months, but that his eyes burnt like the eyes of a man in high fever. Margaret Inch, it seems, looked spiritless and ill.

The "private log" is not expansive on the subject. The entry for the day says—

" October 31, -02.

"This day I was married to Margaret Inch at Fairford."

And that is all.

Yet, upon this rather cheerless beginning, there followed several months—four, to be exact—of something that had all the outward marks of quiet contentment if not of wild rapture. For that matter, rapture, or at least, the expression thereof, would ill have become a middle-aged seafaring man like Drury, and nobody expected ecstatic rhapsodies from his tongue-tied wife. That wouldn't have been like her. They might, however, have expected redder cheeks and more frequent smiles, and, in the man, a higher head and a brighter eye.

Sol Saradine says that Drury complained to him of sleeplessness, and I know Margaret several times said to her neighbours that her husband slept ill, and muttered in his sleep, or got up and walked the floor. His general health suffered from it, after a time, and he went to the old village doctor, who, with exquisitely unconscious irony, bade him rid his mind of any worries or troubles he might be brooding over.

I wonder what Drury said to that?

It was four months and four days after the wedding when the sword at last smote down between the two. I know the exact date, because the private log chronicles the event very briefly.

" March 5, -03.

"Last night I talked in my sleep, and she knows."

It seems Drury awoke, some two or three hours after midnight, in a curious state of inexplicable uneasiness—awoke, as it were, with a sense of calamity and shivering. His wife was gone from his side. waited a few moments, still shivering without apparent reason, then went to look for her. She was not in the house, but the back door of the kitchen was open, and a bitter wind was driving the snow in along the floor. Drury pulled something round his shoulders, went out into the night, and found his wife at the bottom of the orchard, crouched upon the ground, with the snow drifting against her body. She was in a state of nervous anarchy that was practically madness, but her moaning speech was all about one fact, and her husband knew that she knew.

She screamed when he spoke to her, and struck at him—even bit and scratched—but somehow he got her into the house and into her bed, where she fell quiet once more, save for continued moaning, and except when he tried to touch her. Then she screamed.

She was up and about the next day, though with sunken cheeks and staring eyes. She did her household work, and prepared her husband's meals, but herself ate nothing. Drury waited stolidly for her to rush to the neighbours, or to the village constable, and denounce him; but she did nothing of the sort—only moved about her house in that strange and staring apathy, and paid no heed when spoken to. And when he touched her, she broke out into a seemingly uncontrollable paroxysm of screaming.

So it went on for some days—a week—a fortnight—this intolerable state of affairs. For a while, I think, shame and a sense of deadly guilt and remorse held the man's hand, but



"Cap'u Drury went on in that odd guit, stumbling and leaning back."

he was a hard man, and accustomed to dominate. More than once the neighbours heard Margaret Drury screaming horridly by night, and it wasn't long before all the village knew of it, and said that something must be done. In the end, a sort of deputation waited upon Abner Drury—the old parson, Doctor Saltonstall, and two of the elders of the church, all ancients, wagging white beards. They indicated that women do not scream as in deadly agony for a half hour at a time, and repeat it night after night, unless something is wrong, and, without much beating about the bush, they demanded an explanation.

Drury looked at the row of old men fiercely, and the red swept up over his face—perhaps before his eyes again. Then his head dropped, and the spirit broke in him for ever. He said he would give them his answer in two days' time, and meanwhile there would

be no more screaming.

The answer proved to be the sailing of the Aida in the teeth of winter for ports unknown. Sol Saradine, who had money laid by, and toiled only when he felt like it, shipped again as mate. He says he doesn't even now quite

know why.

They laid a southerly course, and put in at Miami, afterwards Nassau, thence a long leg to Galveston, where they remained idle for a fortnight. Drury had once plied a profitable trade between here and certain Cuban ports. He said something about taking it up again, and perhaps would have done so but for what

shortly occurred.

I have asked Sol Saradine how Drury bore himself during these weeks, and the Jew says he was a man crushed, but not broken—which speech you may interpret as snits you. He complained, I know, of sleeping ill, if at all, and was often on his feet the night long, pacing the Aida's deck. He never spoke of his wife, and Sol Saradine, who possesses tact, and who, in common with the rest of Fairford, knew there was some unhappy mystery there, took pains never in any fashion to refer to her.

The private log is written up through these days, but it is a mere transcript of the

ship's log without personal additions.

So now we come to the reason why Drury gave up his idea of carrying coffee between Galveston and Cuba. They had been at the former port nearly a fortnight when Sol Saradine and the skipper returned late one evening to where the Aida lay in her berth in the harbour.

The cuddy ports shone bright and cheery

brury growled something angry about that fool of a cabin-boy, for he was a careful man, and didn't like to see good oil wasted. They went on board, and Sol Saradine pointed out to the skipper a trail of wet footprints and little pools of water that led across the deck to the cabin companion. It looked as if the boy had been swimming in the harbour

before lighting that lamp below.

"I'll take it out of him to-morrow!" Drury said, as they stooped to go under the companion-hood. Sol Saradine observed that the steps here were wet, too, and cautioned the skipper, who was ahead of him, not to slip. But at the bottom of the companion Cap'n Drury halted suddenly, gave a hoarse cry, and flung up one arm over his face, recoiling so that he lurched heavily against Sol Saradine's knees. The Jew bent down to stare over the other man's shoulder into that little brightly-lighted enclosure, and he says that the place was unoccupied, the three bunks, like sepulchral niches in the wall, untouched, the oilcloth-covered table in the middle of the cabin bare, save that Drury's parchment treasure chart, which usually never left his person, and was guarded like his life, lay open there—an astonishing piece of care-There were tiny pools of water beside it on the oilcloth, as if wet arms had rested there. Sol Saradine says he saw them quite distinctly in the bright light of the swinging lamp.

Without taking his eyes from the table, Captain Drury put one hand behind him as if to thrust his companion away, and the hand was shaking violently. He said in a

kind of whisper-

"Go! Leave me alone with him!" And at those inexplicable words the Jew says the back of his head turned suddenly cold, and he felt his hair beginning to bristle. He cannot explain it, and he betrays keen shame over it, but he was seized all at once by a blind, shivering horror. He turned about, scrambled in mad haste up the steps of the companion, ran across the deck, and leapt ashore. Then he ran again until he had reached the friendly lights of the nearest bar, which was also a sailors' lodging-house, and there he spent the remainder of that night.

Some time during the dark hours Drury seems to have written up his private log,

for I find inscribed there-

" March 30, -03.

"This evening young Piers Drury, my nephew, came aboard—him that I killed in

the Sargasso Sea-and we talked about recovering the Spanish gold."

In the morning, Sol Saradine, heartily ashamed of his fears, and ascribing them to the last unnecessary drink of the evening before, went on board the Aida to make his peace. But the skipper did not seem to realise that he had been absent. Cap'n Drury, looking quite himself—indeed, with a more peaceful face than he had shown in many a month—sent him ashore again to order a quantity of gasoline, saying that he meant to sail before noon, in ballast. The Jew asked where. The skipper smiled upon him—Drury smiled—and said—

"To the Sargasso Sea."

The following nine days of that voyage eastward remain even now, I can see, in Sol Saradine's mind, a sort of nightmare. He doesn't like to talk about them. It wasn't that Cap'n Drury was difficult to get on with; he was less difficult than ever before—softer-spoken, more considerate of those about him, almost gentle in his bearing. But in the evening, when the swinging lamp was lighted over the stripped, oilcloth-covered table, then Drury would sit down with the treasure chart before him, and talk earnestly for hours to the empty air across the table.

Further, the place was always wet and cold. Little pools of water stood on the floor and on the table. When mopped up,

others came in their place.

Sol Saradine bore it to the breaking-point, then slung a hammock between decks under the main hatch, and berthed there. The skipper made no comment on the change—if, indeed, he ever noticed it, for he was very absent-minded of late. However, when the cabin-boy had hysterics, and refused to enter that chill, damp place again, Drury awoke from his apathy, flogged the youth soundly, and thereafter, without further complaint, the meals were served, the slops were emptied, and the bunk—yes, two bunks were made.

So on April 8—bear that date in mind—they came once more to the dismal weedy sea, furled their sails, and entered it. Once more they passed the melancholy, dismantled hulks that had been ships, and were now roosting-places for pelagic fowl. The wind dropped, and the air was heavy with the reek of corruption. Towards the end of the third day they made out the two bare masts, approached them, and anchored there. The sun went down, I am told, in a torn welter of blood, and round the Aida, as dusk came on, the sea-birds wailed incessantly.

Sol Saradine, it appears, asked the skipper if he wished the diving gear brought up out of the hold and made ready for use. Drury regarded him with the mild bewilderment latterly characteristic, and said "Yes." So the Jew spent what remained of the daylight over this task, and afterwards walked the deck in some perturbation of spirit. He took it that the skipper himself meant to go down, since there was no one else on board who had even so much as tried on a helmet, but he was quite sure Drury was in no state for such difficult and exacting work. The man was about half crazy, Sol Saradine considered, and he wondered if it mightn't be held justifiable to clap him in irons and make straight for the nearest consular port.

He says he tramped the deck for some hours, considering these matters, screwing up his courage almost to the point of action, and then losing hold of it again, cursing himself for having shipped on board the Aida, for not having demanded a discharge at Galveston. He walked and pondered alone there until late in the night, when the crew were long asleep in their bunks, and the look-out forward was asleep, too, bent over

the anchor windlass.

He says he was just about to take himself to his hammock, when he saw Drury emerge from the cabin companion and walk aft along the deck in the moonlight. He walked, it seems, in a peculiar fashion—two or three hurried steps, then a halt and a hanging back, as if he went reluctantly. It was, says Sol Saradine, exactly as an unwilling little child is dragged along by the hand—only Drury seemed to be alone.

The Jew keeping as well as he might under cover, followed that fantastically progressing figure down the deck, and once called aloud to it, for he thought the man might be walking in his sleep. Cap'n Drury paid no heed to the hail, but went on in that odd gait, stumbling and leaning back, with so extraordinary an appearance of being dragged by a force greater than his own that the mate stared and rubbed his eyes, and at last called out again, in a louder voice this time.

The stumbling figure, with the mate hovering uncertainly some distance behind, came at last to a break in the rail where the dinghy lay at the bottom of a sea-ladder, and halted there with what looked like a violent effort. He had so far been silent, though breathing hard and fast; but when he came to that break in the rail, quite suddenly he threw up his arms and cried his wife's name—

"Margaret! Margaret!" He seemed to

be calling upon her for help in utmost need, and his voice screamed out upon the still night with a shocking clamour—hoarse, dreadful shricks that seemed to tear their way out of his throat. The awakened water-fowl began to screech, too, round about the schooner in the darkness.

Sol Saradine dashed forward with a shout, but before he could reach the spot where the skipper stood, the man was gone with a swift, unnatural violence—not, says the Jew, as if he had fallen or leaped from the deck, but as if he had been jerked away by a rope about his body. There was a great splash at the bottom of the sea-ladder, a final bubbling cry, and then no more.

The look-out, thoroughly awake now, came running aft along the deck, and he and Sol Saradine sprang into the dinghy and pushed off from the schooner's side. They rowed round and round, watching the still surface of the sea, for half an hour or more, then

went back on board. The mate looked at his watch, and it was half-past eleven.

That is about all I have to tell. Sol Saradine brought the Aida back to Fairford and turned her over to the authorities there. He kept in his possession the parchment treasure chart, which he had found on the floor of the cuddy, but I doubt if he will ever make use of it, for he has retired from the sea now, and cultivates his garden; also, the very sound of the name Sargasso makes him shiver.

Margaret Drury is dead, and I have a queer thing to tell about that, which I got from old Mrs. Saltonstall. She passed away on the night of April 8. She had been asleep for some hours, and old Mrs. Saltonstall, her volunteer nurse, was nodding in her chair. She says that, while the hall clock was striking eleven, Margaret Drury suddenly awoke, laughed aloud, and died.

Eleven o'clock on the night of April 8.



## THE GARNER.

ALL that's best remains, the rest's but dust of withered leaves;
Memories of a thousand Aprils haunt the lilac close.
This year's harvest hoards the wealth of centuries' garnered sheaves,
All the fragrance of the past breathes in this year's rose.

I hear the call of all the years in every springtide voice,
All our music's sweeter for the music said and sung;
Echoes held through all the ages bid the heart rejoice,
Even as those that sang together when the earth was young.

Surely trees are greener now and skies are bluer far,

Every summer gathers beauty from the summers past and gone;

Countless centuries of splendour shine from every star,

While my heart enshrines them, those I loved live on.

There is treasure yet in Time's grey castle keep,

There's a ship will sai! course on a chartless sea.

My lost world opens wit gates of sleep,

Dreams give back the gory of my youth to me.

ROSAMUND MARRIOTT WATSON.

## HOW FEAR DEPARTED

## FROM THE LONG GALLERY.

By E. F. BENSON.



URCH - PEVERIL is a house so beset and frequented by spectres, both visible and audible, that none of the family which it shelters under its acre and a half of green copper roofs takes psychical pheno-

mena with any seriousness. For to the Peverils the appearance of a ghost is a matter of hardly greater significance than is the appearance of the post to those who live in more ordinary houses. It arrives, that is to say, practically every day, it knocks-or makes other noises-it is observed coming up the drive, or in other places. I myself, when staying there, have seen the present Mrs. Peveril, who is rather short-sighted, peer into the dusk, while we were taking our coffee on the terrace after dinner, and say to her daughter-

"My dear, was not that the Blue Lady who has just gone into the shrubbery? I hope she won't frighten Flo. Whistle for Flo, dear." Flo, it may be remarked, is the youngest and most precious of many

dachshunds.

Blanche Peveril gave a cursory whistle and crunched the sugar left unmelted at the bottom of her coffee cup between her very white teeth.

"Oh, darling Flo isn't so silly as to mind," she said. " Poor blue Aunt Barbara is such a bore! Whenever I meet her she always looks as if she wanted to speak to me; but when I say, 'What is it, Aunt Barbara?' she never utters, but only points somewhere towards the house, which is so vague. I believe there was something she wanted to confess about two hundred years ago, but she has forgotten what it is."

Here Flo gave two short, pleased barks, and came out of the shrubbery wagging her tail and capering round what appeared to me to be a perfectly empty space on the lawn.

"There, Flo has made friends with her," said Mrs. Peveril. "What a darling! I wonder why she dresses in that very stupid shade of blue."

From this it may be gathered that even with regard to psychical phenomena there is some truth in the proverb that speaks of familiarity. But the Peverils do not exactly treat their ghosts with contempt, since none of that delightful family ever despised anybody except such people as avowedly did not care for hunting or shooting or golf or skating. And as all of their ghosts are of their family, it seems reasonable to suppose that they all, even the poor Blue Lady, excelled at one time in field sports. So far, then, they harbour no such unkindness or contempt, but only pity. Of one Peveril, indeed, who broke his neck in vainly attempting to ride up the main staircase on a thoroughbred mare, after some monstrous and violent deed in the back garden, they are very fond, and Blanche comes downstairs in the morning with an eye unusually bright when she can announce that Master Anthony was "very loud" last night. He-apart from the fact of his having been so foul a ruffian—was a tremendous fellow across country, and they like these indications of the continuance of his superb vitality. In fact, it is supposed to be a compliment, when you go to stay at Church-Peveril, to be assigned a bedroom which is frequented by defunct members of the family. It means that you are worthy to look on the august and villainous dead, and you will find yourself shown into some vaulted or tapestried chamber, without benefit of electric light, and are told that Great-great-grandmamma Bridget occasionally has vague business by the fireplace, but it is better not to talk to her, and that you will hear Master Anthony "awfully well" if he attempts the front staircase any time before morning. There you are left for your night's repose, and, having quakingly undressed, begin reluctantly to put out your candles. It is draughty in these great chambers, and the solemn tapestry swings and bellows and subsides, and the firelight dances on the forms of huntsmen and warriors and stern pursuits. Then you climb up into your bed—a bed so huge that you feel as if the desert of Sahara was spread for you - and pray, like the mariners who sailed with St. Paul, for day. And all the time you are aware that Freddy and Harry and Blanche, and possibly even Mrs. Peveril, are quite capable of dressing up and making disquieting tappings outside your door, so that, when you open it, some inconjecturable horror fronts you. For myself, I stick steadily to the assertion that I have an obscure valvular disease of the heart, and so sleep undisturbed in the new wing of the house, where Aunt Barbara and Great-great-grandmamma Bridget and Master Anthony never penetrate. get the details of Great-great-grandmamma Bridget, but she certainly cut the throat of some distant relation before shedisembowelled herself with the axe that had been used at Agincourt. Before that she had led a very sultry life, crammed with amazing incident.

But there is one ghost at Church-Peveril at which the family never laugh, in which they feel no friendly and amused interest, and of which they only speak just as much as is necessary for the safety of their guests. More properly it should be described as two ghosts, for the "haunt" in question is that of two very young children who were twins. These, not without reason, the family take very seriously indeed. The story of them, as told me by Mrs. Peveril, is as follows:—

In the year 1602, the same being the last of Queen Elizabeth's reign, a certain Dick Peveril was greatly in favour at Court. He was brother to Master Joseph Peveril, then owner of the family house and lands, who, two years previously, became father of twin boys, first-born of his progeny. It is known that the royal and ancient virgin had said to Handsome Dick, who was nearly forty years his brother's junior, "'Tis pity that you are not master of Church-Peveril," and these words probably suggested to him a sinister design. Be that as it may, Handsome Dick, who very adequately sustained the family reputation for wickedness, set off to ride down to Yorkshire, and found that, very conveniently, his brother Joseph had just been seized with an apoplexy, which appeared to be the result of a continued spell of hot weather combined with the necessity of quenching his thirst with an augmented amount of sack, and had actually died while Handsome Dick, with Heaven knows what thoughts in his mind, was journeying northwards.

Thus it came about that he arrived at Church-Peveril just in time for his brother's funeral. It was with great propriety that he attended the obsequies, and returned to spend a sympathetic day or two of mourning with his widowed sisterin-law, who was but a faint-hearted dame, little fit to be mated with such hawks as these.

On the second night of his stay he did that which the Peverils regret to this day. He entered the room where the twins slept with their nurse, and quietly strangled the latter as she slept. Then he took the twins and put them into the fire which warms the Long Gallery. The weather, which up to the day of Joseph's death had been so hot, had changed su idenly to bitter cold, and the fire was heaped high with burning logs and was exultant with flame. In the core of this conflagration he struck out a cremation chamber, and into that he threw the two children, stamping them down with his riding-boots. They could just walk, but they could not walk out of that ardent place. It is said that he laughed as he added more logs. Thus he became master of Church-Peveril.

The crime was never brought home to him, but he lived no longer than a year in the enjoyment of his bloodstained inheritance. When he lay a-dying, he made his confession to the priest who attended him, but his spirit struggled forth from its fleshly coil before absolution could be given him. On that very night there began in Church-Peveril the haunting which to this day is but seldom spoken of by the family, and then only in low tones and with serious mien. For only an hour or two after Handsome Dick's death, one of the servants, passing the door of the Long Gallery, heard from within peals of the loud laughter, so jovial and yet so sinister, which he had thought would never be heard in the house again. In a moment of that cold courage which is so nearly akin to mortal terror, he opened the door and entered, expecting to see he knew not what manifestation of him who lay dead in the room below. Instead he saw two little white-robed figures toddling towards him hand in hand across the moonlit floor.

The watchers in the room below ran upstairs, startled by the crash of his fallen body, and found him lying in the grip of some dread convulsion. Just before morning he regained consciousness and told his tale. Then, pointing with trembling and ash-grey

finger towards the door, he screamed aloud and so fell back dead.

During the next fifty years this strange and terrible legend of the twin babies became Their appearance, fixed and consolidated. luckily for those who inhabited the house, was exceedingly rare, and during these years they seem to have been seen four or five times only. On each occasion they appeared at night, between sunset and sunrise, always in the same Long Gallery, and always as two toddling children scarcely able to walk. And on each occasion the luckless individual who saw them died either speedily or terribly, or with both speed and terror, after the accurred vision had appeared to him. Sometimes he might live for a few months; he was lucky if he died, as did the servant who first saw them, in a few hours. Vastly more awful was the fate of a certain Mrs. Canning, who had the ill-luck to see them in the middle of the next century, or, to be quite accurate, in the year 1760. By this time the hours and the place of their appearance was well known, and, as to this day, visitors were warned not to go between sunset and sunrise into the Long Gallery.

But Mrs. Canning, a brilliantly clever and beautiful woman, admirer also and friend of the notorious sceptic M. Voltaire, wilfully went and sat night after night, in spite of all protestations, in the haunted place. For four evenings she saw nothing, but on the fifth she had her will, for the door in the middle of the gallery opened, and there came toddling towards her the ill-omened innocent little pair. It seemed that even then she was not frightened, but she thought good, poor wretch, to mock at them, telling them it was time for them to get back into the hre. They gave no word in answer, but turned away from her, crying and sobbing. Immediately after they disappeared from her vision, and she rustled downstairs to where the family and guests in the house were waiting for her, with the triumphant announcement that she had seen them both, and must needs write to M. Voltaire, saying that she had spoken to spirits made manifest. It would make him laugh. But when some

Mrs. Canning was one of the great beauties of her day, and in the year 1760 she was at the height and zenith of her blossoming. Her chief beauty, if it is possible to single out one point where all was so exquisite, lay in the dazzling colour and incomparable brilliance of her complexion. She was now

months later the whole news reached him, he

did not laugh at all.

just thirty years of age, but, in spite of the excesses of her life, retained the snow and roses of girlhood, and she courted the bright light of day, which other women shunned, for it but showed to greater advantage the splendour of her skin. In consequence, she was very considerably dismayed one morning, about a fortnight after her strange experience in the Long Gallery, to observe on her left cheek, an inch or two below her turquoisecoloured eyes, a little greyish patch of skin about as big as a threepenny piece. It was in vain that she applied her accustomed washes and unguents; vain, too, were the arts of her fardeuse and of her medical adviser. For a week she kept herself secluded, martyring herself with solitude and unaccustomed physics, and for result, at the end of the week, she had no amelioration to comfort herself with-instead, this woeful grey patch had doubled itself in size. Thereafter the nameless disease, whatever it was, developed in new and terrible ways. From the centre of the discoloured place there sprouted forth little lichen-like tendrils of greenish-grey and another patch appeared on her lower This, too, soon vegetated, and one morning, on opening her eyes to the horror of a new day, she found that her vision was strangely blurred. She rushed to her looking-glass, and what she saw caused her to shrick aloud with horror. From under her upper eyelid a fresh growth had sprung up mushroom-like in the night, and its filaments extended downwards, screening the pupil of her eye. Soon after her tongue and throat were attacked, the air passages became obstructed, and death by suffocation was merciful after such suffering.

More terrible yet was the case of a certain Colonel Blantyre, who fired at the children with his revolver. What he went through is not to be recorded here.

It is this haunting, then, that the Peverils take quite seriously, and every guest on his arrival in the house is told that the Long Gallery must not be entered after nightfall on any pretext whatever. By day, however, it is a delightful room, and intrinsically merits description, apart from the fact that the due understanding of its geography is necessary for the account that here follows. It is full eighty feet in length, and is lit by a row of six tall windows looking over the gardens at the back of the house. A door communicates with the landing at the top of the main staircase, and about half-way down the gallery, in the wall facing the windows, is another door communicating with the back

staircase and servants' quarters, and thus the gallery forms a constant place of passage for them in going to the rooms on the first landing. It was through this door that the baby figures came when they appeared to Mrs. Canning, and on several other occasions they have been known to make their entry here, for the room out of which Handsome Dick took them lies just beyond at the top of the back stairs. Further on again in the gallery is the fireplace into which he thrust them, and at the far end a large bow-window looks straight down the avenue. Above this fireplace there hangs with grim significance a portrait of Handsome Dick, in the insolent beauty of early manhood, attributed to Holbein, and a dozen other portraits of great merit face the windows. During the day this is the most frequented sitting-room in the house, for its other visitors never appear there then, nor does it then ever resound with the harsh, jovial laugh of Handsome Dick, which sometimes, after dark has fallen, is heard by passers-by on the landing outside. But Blanche does not grow brighteyed when she hears it; she shuts her cars and hastens to put a greater distance between her and the sound of that atrocious mirth.

But during the day the Long Gallery is frequented by many occupants, and much laughter in no wise sinister or saturnine is heard there. When summer lies hot over the land, these occupants lounge in the deep window-seats, and when winter spreads his icy fingers and blows shrilly between his frozen palms, congregate round the fireplace at the far end, and perch in companies of cheerful chatterers upon sofa and chair and chair-back and floor. Often have I sat there on long August evenings up till dressingtime, but never have I been there when anyone has seemed disposed to linger over-late without hearing the warning: "It is close on sunset. Shall we go?" Later on, in the shorter autumn days, they often have tea laid there; and sometimes it has happened that even while merriment was most uproarious, Mrs. Peveril has suddenly looked out of the window and said : " My dears, it is getting so late; let us finish our nonsense downstairs in the hall." And then for a moment a carious hush always falls on loquacious family and guests alike, and, as if some bad news had just been made known, we all make our silent way out of the place. But the spirits of the Peverils-of the living ones, that is to say--are the most mercurial imaginable, and the blight which the thought of Handsome

Dick and his doings casts over them passes

away again with amazing rapidity.

A typical party, large, young, and peculiarly cheerful, was staying at Church-Peveril shortly after Christmas last year, and as usual, on December 31, Mrs. Peveril was giving her annual New Year's Eve ball. The house was quite full, and she had commandeered as well the greater part of "The Peveril Arms" to provide sleeping quarters for the overflow from the house. For some days past a black and windless frost had stopped all hunting; but it is an ill windlessness that blows no good—if so mixed a metaphor may be forgiven-and the lake below the house had for the last day or two been covered with an adequate and admirable sheet of ice. Everyone in the house had been occupied all the morning of that day in performing swift and violent manœuvres on the elusive surface, and as soon as lunch was over, we all, with one exception, hurried out again. This one exception was Madge Dalrymple, who had had the misfortune to fall rather badly earlier in the day, but hoped, by resting her injured knee, instead of joining the skaters again, to be able to dance that evening. The hope, it is true, was of the most sanguine sort, for she could but hobble ignobly back to the house, but with the breezy optimism which characterises the Peverils—she is Blanche's first consin-she remarked that it would be but tepid enjoyment that she could in her present state derive from further skating, and thus she sacrificed little but might gain much.

Accordingly, after a rapid cup of coffee, which was served in the Long Gallery, we left Madge comfortably reclined on the big sofa at right-angles to the fireplace, with an attractive book to beguile the tedium till tea. Being of the family, she knew all about Handsome Dick and the babies, and the fate of Mrs. Canning and Colonel Blantyre, but as we went out, I heard Blanche say to her, "Don't run it too fine, dear," and Madge had replied, "No, I'll go away well before sunset." And so we left her alone in the

Long Gallery.

Madge read her attractive book for some minutes, but, failing to get absorbed in it, put it down and limped across to the window. Though it was still but little after two, it was but a dim and uncertain light that entered, for the crystalline brightness of the morning had given place to a veiled obscurity produced by flocks of thick clouds which were coming sluggishly up from the north-

east. Already the whole sky was overcast with them, and occasionally a few snowflakes fluttered waveringly down past the long windows. From the darkness and bitter cold of the afternoon it seemed to her that there was like to be a heavy snowfall before long, and these outward signs were echoed inwardly in her by that muffled drowsiness of the brain which, to those who are sensitive to the pressures and lightnesses of weather, portends storm. Madge was peculiarly the prey of such external influences. To her a brisk morning gave an ineffable brightness and gaiety of spirit, and correspondingly the approach of heavy weather produced a somnolence in sensation that both drowsed and depressed her.

It was in such mood as this that she limped back again to the sofa beside the log fire. The whole house was comfortably heated by water-pipes, and though the fire of logs and peat, an adorable mixture, had been allowed to burn low, the room was very warm. Idly she watched the dwindling flames, not opening her book again, but lying on the sofa with face towards the fireplace, intending drowsily and not immediately to go to her own room and spend the hours, until the return of the skaters made gaiety in the house again, in writing one or two neglected letters. Still drowsily she began thinking over what she had to communicate. One letter, several days overdue, should go to her mother, who was immensely interested in the psychical affairs of the She would tell her how Master family. Anthony had been prodigiously active on the staircase a night or two ago, and how the Blue Lady, regardless of the severity of the weather, had been seen by Mrs. Peveril that morning strolling about. It was rather interesting. The Blue Lady had gone down the laurel walk, and had been seen by her to enter the stables, where at the moment Freddy Peveril was inspecting the frostbound hunters. Identically then a sudden panic had spread through the stables, and the horses had whinnied and kicked and Of the fatal twins shied and sweated. nothing had been seen for many years past, but, as her mother knew, the Peverils never used the Long Gallery after dark.

Then for a moment she sat up, remembering that she was in the Long Gallery now. But it was still but a little after half-past two, and if she went to her room in half an hour, she would have ample time to write this and another letter before tea. Till then she would read her book. But she

found she had left it on the window-sill, and it seemed scarcely worth while to get it.

She felt exceedingly drowsy.

The sofa where she lay had been lately re-covered in a greyish-green shade of velvet somewhat the colour of lichen. It was of very thick, soft texture, and she luxuriously stretched her arms out, one on each side of her body, and pressed her fingers into the nap. How horrible that story of Mrs. Canning was! The growth on her face was of the colour of lichen. . . . And then, without further transition or blurring of

thought, Madge fell asleep.

She dreamed. She dreamed that she awoke and found herself exactly where she had gone to sleep, and in exactly the same attitude. The flames from the logs had burned up again, and leaped on the walls, fitfully illuminating the picture of Handsome Dick above the fireplace. In her dream she knew exactly what she had done to-day, and for what reason she was lying here now instead of being out with the rest of the skaters. She remembered also-still dreaming-that she was going to write a letter or two before tea, and prepared to get up in order to go to her room. As she half rose, she caught sight of her own arms lying out on each side of her on the grey velvet sofa. But she could not see where her hands ended and where the grey velvet began; her fingers seemed to have melted into the stuff. She could see her wrists quite clearly, and a blue vein on the backs of her hands, and here and there a knuckle. Then in her dream she remembered the last thought which had been in her mind before she fell asleep—namely, the growth of the lichen-coloured vegetation on the face and the eyes and the throat of Mrs. Canning. At that thought the strangling terror of real nightmare began. She knew that she was being transformed into this grey stuff, and she was absolutely unable to move. Soon the grey would spread up her arms and over her face. When they came in from skating, they would find here nothing but a huge misshapen cushion of lichen-coloured velvet, and that would be she. The horror grew more acute, and then by a violent effort she shook herself free of the clutches of this very evil dream, and awoke.

For a minute or two she lay there, conscious only of the tremendous relief at finding herself awake. She felt again with her fingers the pleasant touch of the velvet, and drew them backwards and forwards, assuring herself that she was not, as her dream had suggested, melting into greyness and softness. But she was still, in spite of the violence of her awaking, very sleepy, and lay there till, looking down, she was aware that she could not see her hands at all; it

was very nearly dark.

At that moment a sudden flicker of flame came from the dying fire, and a flare of burning gas from the peat flooded the room. The portrait of Handsome Dick looked evilly down on her, and her hands were visible again. And then a panic worse than the panic of her dreams seized her. Daylight had altogether faded, and she knew that she was alone in the dark in the terrible gallery. This panic was of the nature of nightmare, for she felt unable to move for terror. But it was worse than nightmare, because she knew she was awake. And then the full cause of this frozen fear dawned on her—she knew with the certainty of absolute conviction that she was about to see the twin babies.

She felt a sudden moisture break out on her face, and within her mouth her tongue and throat went suddenly dry, and she felt her tongue grate along the inner surface of her teeth. All power of movement had slipped from her limbs, leaving them dead and inert, and she stared with wide eyes into the blackness. The spurt of flame from the peat had burned itself out again, and

darkness encompassed her.

Then on the wall opposite her, facing the windows, there grew a faint light of dusky crimson. For a moment she thought it but heralded the approach of the awful vision; then hope revived in her heart, and she remembered that thick clouds had overcast the sky before she went to sleep, and guessed that this light came from the sun, not yet quite sunk and set. This sudden revival of hope gave her the necessary stimulus, and she sprang off the sofa where she lay. She looked out of the window and saw the dull glow on the horizon. But before she could take a step forward, it was obscured again. A tiny sparkle of light came from the hearth, which did no more than illuminate the tiles of the fireplace, and snow falling heavily sign illed at the window-panes. There was neither light nor sound except these.

But the courage that had come to her, giving her the power of movement, had not quite described her, and she began feeling her way down the gallery. And then she found that she was lost. She stumbled against a chair, and, recovering herself, stumbled against another. Then a table barred her way, and, turning swiftly aside, she found herself up

against the back of a sofa. Once more she turned and saw the dim gleam of the firelight on the side opposite to that on which she expected it. In her blind gropings she must have reversed her direction. But which She seemed way was she to go now? blocked in by furniture. And all the time insistent and imminent was the fact that the two innocent terrible ghosts were about to

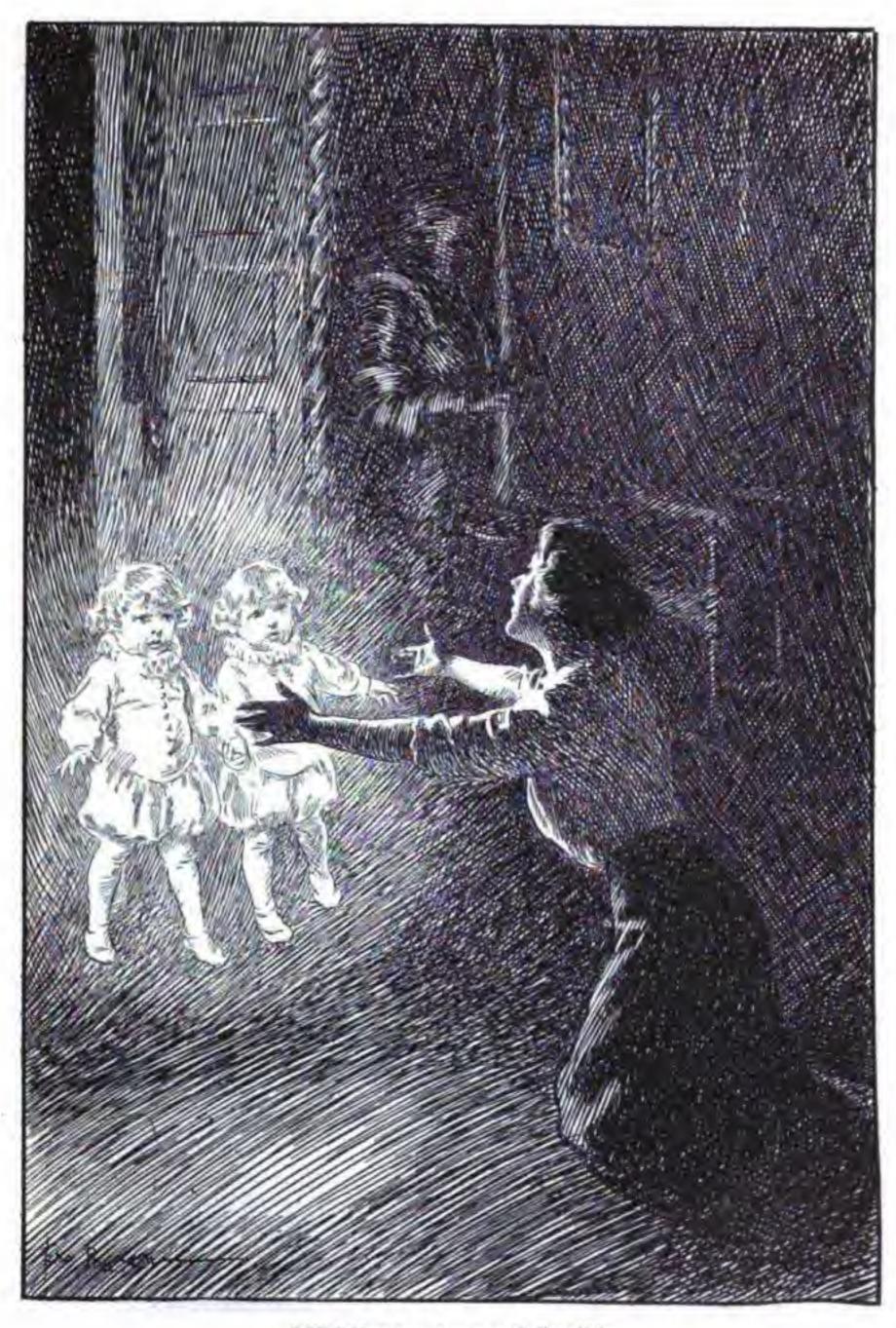
appear to her.

Then she began to pray. "Lighten our darkness, O Lord!" she said to herself. But she could not remember how the prayer continued, and she had sore need of it. There was something about the perils of the night.... All this time she felt about her with groping, fluttering hands. The fire glimmer, which should have been on her left, was on her right again, therefore she must turn herself round once more. "Lighten our darkness," she whispered, and then aloud she repeated, "Lighten our darkness!"

She stumbled up against a screen, and could not remember the existence of any such screen. Hastily she felt beside it with blind hands, and touched something scft and velvety. Was it the sofa on which she had lain? If so, where was the head of it? It had a head and a back and feet...it was like a person all covered with grey lichen ... then she lost her head completely. All that remained to her was to pray. She was lost, lost in this awful place, where no one came in the dark except the babics that cried. And she heard her voice rising from whisper to speech, and speech to scream. shricked out the holy words, she yelled them as if blaspheming, as she groped among tables and chairs and the pleasant things of ordinary

life which had become so terrible.

Then came a sudden and an awful answer to her screamed prayer. Once more a pocket of inflammable gas in the peat on the hearth was reached by the smouldering embers, and the room started into light. She saw the evil eyes of Handsome Dick, she saw the little ghostly snowflakes falling this kly outside, and she saw where she was-just opposite the door through which the terrible twins made their entrance. Then the flame went out again, and left her in blackn ss once more. But she had gained something, for she had her geography now. The centre of the room was bare of furniture, and one swift dart would take her to the door of the landing above the main staircase and into safety. In that gleam she had been able to see the handle of the door, bright-brassed, luminous like a star. She would go straight



"God bless you, you poor darlings!"

for it; it was but a matter of a few seconds now.

She took a long breath, partly of relief, partly to satisfy the demands of her galloping heart. But the breath was only half taken when she was stricken once more into the

immobility of nightmare.

There came a little whisper—it was no more than that-from the door opposite which she stood, and through which the twin babies entered. It was not quite dark outside, for she could see that the door was opening. And there stood in the opening two little white figures, side by side. They came towards her slowly, shufflingly. She could not see face or form at all distinctly, but the two little white figures were advancing. She knew them to be the ghosts of terror, innocent of the awful doom they were bound to bring, even as she was innocent. With the inconceivable rapidity of thought, she made up her mind what to do. She had not hurt them or laughed at them, and they-they were but babies when the wicked and bloody deed had sent them to their burning death. Surely the spirits of these children would not be inaccessible to the cry of one who was of the same blood as they, who had committed no fault that merited the doom they brought. If she entreated them, they might have mercy, they might forbear to bring the curse on her, they might allow her to pass out of the place without blight, without the sentence of death or the shadow of things worse than death upon her.

It was but for the space of a moment that she hesitated; then she sank down on to her knees and stretched out her hands towards

them.

"Oh, my dears," she said, "I only fell asleep! I have done no more wrong than that——"

She paused a moment, and her tender girl's heart thought no more of herself, but only of them, those little innocent spirits on whom so awful a doom was laid that they should bring death where other children bring laughter, and doom for delight. But all those who had seen them before had dreaded and feared them, or had mocked at them.

Then as the enlightenment of pity dawned on her, her fear fell from her like the wrinkled sheath that holds the sweet folded

buds of spring.

"It is not your fault that you must bring me what you must bring, but I am not afraid any longer. I am only sorry for you. God bless you, you poor darlings!"

She raised her head and looked at them. Though it was so dark, she could now see their faces, though all was dim and wavering, like the light of pale flames shaken by a draught. But the faces were not miserable or fierce; they smiled at her with shy little baby smiles. And as she looked, they grew

faint, fading slowly away like wreaths of vapour in frosty air:

Madge did not at once move when they had vanished, for instead of fear there was wrapped round her a wonderful sense of peace, so happy and serene that she would not willingly stir and so perhaps disturb it. But before long she got up, and feeling her way, but without any sense of nightmare pressing her on, or frenzy of fear to spur her, she went out of the Long Gallery, to find Blanche just coming upstairs whistling and swinging her skates.

"How's the leg, dear?" she asked.

"You're not limping any more."

Till that moment Madge had not thought of it.

"I think it must be all right," she said.

"I had forgotten it, anyhow. Blanche, dear, you won't be frightened for me, will you, but—but I have seen the twins!"

For a moment Blanche's face whitened with

terror.

"What?" she said in a whisper.

"Yes, I saw them just now. But they were kind, they smiled at me, and I was so sorry for them, and somehow I am sure I have nothing to fear."

It seems that Madge was right, for nothing untoward has come to her. Something—her attitude to them, we must suppose, her pity, her sympathy—touched and dissolved and annihilated the curse. Indeed, I was at Church-Peveril only last week, arriving there after dark. Just as I passed the gallery door, Blanche came out.

"Ah, there you are!" she said. "I've just been seeing the twins. They looked too sweet, and stopped nearly ten minutes. Let us have tea at once."

# THE TEMPLE OF THE BEAST.

### By T. C. BRIDGES.



I took him by the neck and nearly flogged the life out of him!" finished Denyer.

Aveling had listened quietly, though the lines on his thin, brown face had deepened slightly. Now he

rose and, leaning across the bare table,

stared straight at the other.

"Look here, Denyer, I don't often interfere, but I've told you before that you'll never get any good out of these fellows by thrashing them. These Matabele are men; they're not like your wretched, lying, half-civilised Cape Kaffirs. Once and for all, you've got to stop it. Do you quite understand?"

Aveling seldom spoke like this, but when he did, Denyer knew that he meant it. Aveling was his superior officer, being manager and part-owner of the mine.

Denyer scowled, opened his mouth as if about to retort angrily, thought better of it, and, getting up, marched out of the room, slamming the door so that all the rickety frame-built shanty rattled.

Through the wide-open window Aveling saw him fling himself down with unnecessary violence in a long cane chair, and caught vague mutterings of sulky discontent.

"What a life!" muttered the young manager, as he turned the ill-trimmed paraffin lamp a little higher, and reached for his writing-case. "Beastly country, beastly climate, a mine that don't pay and never will, and penned here, for Heaven knows how long, with a brute like that!

"Pon my soul," he continued to himself, staring idly out through the window, "I feel positively murderous at times! I've half a mind to chuck the whole business, go back

to England, and take my chance."

There came the light thud of bare feet outside, and a tap at the door, which was opened by a young negro. As he entered, he cast a quick, sidelong glance at Denyer, who was sitting scowling in the verandah, and an expression half of fear, half of hate, flitted across his face. Without a word he laid a letter on the table and stood quietly by.

Aveling took up the letter. It was addressed in pencil, and the writing was

shaky and indistinct.

Inside was a half sheet of note-paper, with these words scrawled in the same feeble hand: "Come up at once. I have something of great importance to say to you. Don't wait till morning, or it will be too late.— G. Staniforth."

Aveling tore the note in pieces, and, crumpling them up, flung them on the floor.

"Thank you, Maputa," he said. "There

is no answer."

The man glided away silent as a shadow. Aveling took his hat from a nail in the wall, lit a pipe, and stepped out through the verandah. Denyer looked up as he passed, but said nothing.

It was an uphill pull of about a mile to the lonely house where "Old Stand-off," as the mine staff called him, lived his solitary

life.

With long, even steps Aveling strode on through the stifling bush, and soon gained the comparative coolness of the hill-top. An uneasy suspicion that Staniforth was ill troubled his mind.

On reaching the latter's house, he rapped

on the door with his stick.

The queer old Mashona who was Staniforth's only servant let him in.

"Baas pretty sick," he volunteered cheer-

fully.

Aveling could see that for himself. The old man lay on his cot by the open window, breathing heavily. At first Aveling thought he was unconscious, but, as he crossed the room, Staniforth opened his eyes.

"That you, Aveling?" he asked weakly.

"Yes," said the latter, pulling up a chair and seating himself beside the cot. "What's the trouble, old man?"

With an effort Staniforth raised himself on the pillow. "I'm done!" he muttered hoarsely. "This cursed lung of mine—"

Aveling pulled a flask of brandy from his pocket and held it to the sick man's lips. Staniforth drank greedily, and a faint flush

of colour stole into his cheeks.

"Listen here," he said, plucking at Aveling's sleeve. "You've been a pal to me—the only white man in all South Africa that I'd raise a finger to help. They're all the same but you—all sniffin' round to borrer money, and then laugh at 'Old Standorf' behind his back. Eh, I know 'em—curse 'em!"

A violent fit of coughing interrupted his

speech.

"It's all right," he went on, feebly putting aside Aveling's hand, as the Englishman attempted to lift him. "You can't do nothin' for me. I've got my ticket straight enough. Your job's to sit still and listen. Give us another drink."

He grasped the flask again, and Aveling heard the spirit gurgle down his throat.

"Bend over," he muttered; "my shoutin' time's past. I'm dyin', Avelin', but I'll make your fortune for you-I swear I will! You know the Mabunda Listen here. country-eh? Yes, that's right. Well, keep up the Kwanda river till you strike Lomba. Then thirty miles nor' nor'-west, and you'll find yourself in a karoo, with a muddle of hills away to the north. There's one-squaretopped-higher than the rest. Foller the dry gorge, and you come to the lake. It's all dead—no blacks, no birds, not a sign o' life! You'll see a great cave on the further shore. I found it twent— What's the matter? I'm-I'm dyin, Avelin'! It's gold—cups—pots—tons of it—but there's somethin'-the natives-tagati-don't-" With a sudden gasp he fell back.

Aveling snatched up the flask, but it was too late. Staniforth rolled over, twisted once in a hideous convulsion, and then lay

still.

Aveling stood by the bedside a moment in silence. The story which the dead man had gasped out seemed wildly improbable. Gold—tons of it lying in a cave! Surely it was nonsense—the ravings of delirium. And yet the old man's deadly earnestness had impressed him. There had been an unmistakable ring of sincerity in those muttered words.

Suppose the story was genuine, after all! Staniforth must have got his money from somewhere. His mysterious silence on the subject had long been a matter for gossip throughout the countryside.

Pulling himself together, he stooped to close the dead eyes. As he did so, the bushes below the open window rustled sharply. With one spring Aveling was outside, and stood listening intently. But the only sounds were the harsh rattle of the crickets, the bleating of the tree-frogs, and the churring cry of a night-jar.

"I wonder!" said Aveling thoughtfully,

as he went back into the house.

An hour later, as he neared the compound of the Maxim Hill Mine, a shadowy figure rose out of the long grass by the path. It was Maputa who stood there, with his fingers to his lips.

"Baas Denyer, him follow," he whispered.

"Him just come home."

"Good lad," said Aveling. "You were right to tell me. But, mind, not a word to anyone else. This complicates matters," he muttered, as he passed through the gate. "I wonder how much the beggar heard?"

When he got into the sitting-room, he looked on the floor. The torn fragments of

old Staniforth's note were gone.

Aveling sat down, lit his pipe, and began to think matters over. Was it worth going? Was it a wild-goose chase, or was there anything in it? If appearances were to be trusted, Denyer was on the track. Ten to one he had heard the whole story, and meant to have a try for old Staniforth's treasure. A smile flickered across Aveling's face as he pictured a race between himself and Denyer for this rainbow gold.

He got out a map and began to trace the route. He found that the journey would take him about a week. There would be no difficulty in being away for a fortnight, for at the present moment there was practically nothing doing at the mine. When at last he rose and turned into his sleeping-room, Aveling's mind was made up. He would have a try for the treasure, and—he would get the start of Denyer.

The sun was just touching the eastern hills with a rim of crimson when Aveling, riding his favourite horse, Billy, left the mine. As soon as he was out of sight of the buildings, he put his horse to a canter.

For three days he rode hard, sleeping but little, and very lightly at that. When, on the fourth, he crossed the Zambesi, his spirits began to rise. At midday he off-saddled long enough to shoot a buck and replenish his fast-failing larder.

There followed two slow and toilsome days through twisty bush paths deep in red mud. Aveling had to steer by compass, and he breathed more freely when, on the seventh day from home, he found himself once more

on open veldt, cut here and there by deep,

heavily-wooded kloofs.

By this time he was beginning to feel the strain severely, and the redoubtable Billy was showing unmistakable signs of the journey. At midday Aveling climbed a hill and carefully scanned the south-eastern horizon.

"Shaken him off, I fancy," he said, as he walked down to where he had left his horse. "Billy, old man, we'll camp early to-night, and you shall have a chance for once to fill your poor old tummy. Won't do for you to crack up."

The horse whinnied and thrust its soft

muzzle into its master's hand.

About five that evening Aveling reached a kloof with good water and grass, and after eating an early supper, rolled himself in his blanket and lay drowsily watching Billy as the latter cropped the rich pasture.

The next thing he knew he had awakened with a sharp start. "A shot!" he muttered, as he scrambled to his feet and rapidly took cover behind a tree. It was grey dawn, and

the still world a-drip with dew.

Aveling stared round, but all was quiet. He smiled. "It must have been a breaking bough, or perhaps Billy trod on a stick."

By the by, where was Billy? Aveling moved cautiously through the bush. Presently he caught sight of his horse lying down close by the river, some three hundred yards away.

"Billy!" he called, as he walked towards him. But Billy did not stir. A sudden horrid fear tightened across Aveling's heart. Reckless of danger, he plunged forward

through the undergrowth.

As he reached his horse's side, a low cry of rage and grief broke from his lips. Billy lay in a pool of his own blood, which was still trickling slowly from a small bullet-hole behind the shoulder.

Two days later, footsore and hungry, Aveling reached the native village of Lomba, and there traded his rifle for a pony and a three days' stock of mealies and bananas. Without pausing for so much as a night's rest, he pushed on across the open veldt beyond the town; and so well did his wiry little beast travel, that morning found him on the desert plain of which Staniforth had told him, with the bald hills blue on the northern horizon.

A narrow native track ran across the plain. On it were a horse's footprints—a shod horse's. Hastily Aveling leapt down and examined them. They were not more than two hours old. A grim smile flickered across his face.

"Denyer, my friend," he muttered, "you were a fool to dawdle; it wasn't healthy."

Pushing his pony to the top of its speed, Aveling travelled fast across the glaring waste of sand and salt bush, and with every mile the gaunt hills climbed higher across the western horizon.

With every mile, too, the desolation increased, until, when he reached the foot of the range, he seemed to be gazing at the broken fragments of some forgotten world.

The rocks which towered abruptly out of the desert were of a nature entirely different from anything within Aveling's experience. They were black and evidently extremely dense and hard, and the sun, beating fiercely on their dull surface, reverberated a sullen heat like that from a blast furnace.

Yet, in spite of the terrific temperature, a cold shudder shook the man as he checked his pony a moment before entering the pass. There was no doubt about the way. The track which had led him all across the plain ran straight into the mouth of a narrow gap, and crawled upwards in steep, stone-strewn curves.

At the point where the sand changed to rock, the hoof-marks of Denyer's horse were

distinctly visible.

Again Aveling smiled. Then, loosening his revolver in its heat-cracked holster, he

rode straight into the pass.

As he mounted slowly upwards, his pony slipping and stumbling among the loose rocks, the surroundings became ever more gloomy and repulsive. The sides of the gorge grew higher, and closed in until the sky was a mere rift of blue, and at the bottom reigned an everlasting twilight. The silence was horrible, unbroken even by the chirp of a cricket or the cry of a bird. There was not a living thing in sight—not a scorpion, a spider, or a snake. The very stinging flies had ceased their buzzing. A hideous, unnatural stagnation brooded over the entire gorge.

He had covered about a mile of this unpromising road when suddenly the pass made a sharp bend to the left and broke away into nothingness. Near the edge of the gap, with its bridle flung over a projecting spike of rock, stood a horse. Aveling

recognised it instantly as Denyer's.

But of its rider there was no sign. Springing from his saddle, Aveling tethered his own pony, then, pistol in hand and with his heart beating a little faster than usual, walked towards the opening.

Prepared as he was for strange sights, the

reality surpassed his wildest imaginings. He found himself looking straight down into a gigantic pit or crater, at the bottom of which lay a sheet of water black as ink and smooth as oil. This pit was roughly oval in shape, and the pass by which Aveling had come pierced it at the narrow eastern end. On every side but one sheer walls of the same strange ebony rock of which the whole range was composed dropped to the surface of the black, stagnant lake.

The exception was the opposite end, where the cliff was broken by an immense arch of rock, which seemed to form a roof for that

portion of the lake.

Across the rock-face, to the right of this arch, crawled slowly a figure, looking hardly larger than a fly.

It was Denyer, making direct for the

cavern mouth.

At first Aveling could not make out how the man had reached his present position. Then, peering over the sheer edge, he saw that a path, a mere ledge not a yard wide, led in a long downward curve towards the month of the cave.

Quivering with impatience, Aveling waited till his enemy had reached the mouth of the black arch and passed out of sight. Then, dropping over the ledge, he hurried in pursuit. Plainly the path had been made by man. Some ancient race had with infinite labour carved this ledge in the living rock for the purpose of reaching the mysterious opening in the far wall of the crater lake.

At any other time Aveling would have used infinite caution in creeping down this narrow, slippery footway, where there was no hand-hold to save him from the fatal consequences of a stumble. Now his whole mind was so savagely concentrated on the idea of foiling Denyer that he leapt recklessly down the dangerous slope, and reached the cave mouth within less than ten minutes after the other had disappeared within its recesses.

Here he paused a moment before entering. In spite of his excitement, the weird horror of the place impressed him powerfully. Above him the black cliffs towered towards the pale blue sky; at his feet lay the oily surface of the apparently fathomless lake, unbroken by a single ripple. Over all brooded that awful unbroken silence. A sudden chill fear gripped him. A horror of some unknown danger seemed to be closing in upon him.

He gave himself an impatient shake, and leapt lightly over a large knob of rock which carried the path round the sharp angle into the mouth of the cave. Aveling's first sensation was of a disgusting and almost overpowering musky stench.
Then, as his eyes became accustomed to the
gloom, he saw that the ledge continued inwards, and, running just above the level of
the murky water, led to a great square table
carved out of the solid rock at the further
end of the cave.

The rock of which this table or altar was composed was highly polished, and on its surface were deeply-graven strange figures of human beings with the heads of animals. But it was not the altar itself which held Aveling's eyes. Its flat top was covered with heavy metal utensils, bowls, platters, and in the centre an enormous vase, which caught some faint reflection from the outer air, and glowed like old dull bronze.

Upon the ledge in front of the altar stood Denyer, greedily gathering a number of the platters, which clanked heavily as he stacked

them in one pile.

The grim humour of the situation appealed to Aveling, and he stood quite still, awaiting the inevitable moment when Denyer must turn and face the man whom he had tricked and tried to rob.

Suddenly his eye was attracted by a movement of the water beneath him. Looking down, he saw that its surface was beginning to heave and bubble, as though something were stirring in its depths. Every moment the acrid odour became stronger and more pungent.

The movement of the water increased. Greasy ripples lapped noiselessly against the sides of the cavern. Something huge, dim, formless, was rising out of the dusky recesses. Horror seized Aveling—a nightmare dread that paralysed his muscles and held him

helpless and motionless.

A pale phosphorescent glimmer broke the blackness of the horrible pool, and then, almost opposite the spot where Aveling stood, the water parted, and out of its depths there rose a form more hideous than in his wildest dreams he had ever conceived.

In shape it resembled a crocodile of the sort with which Aveling's experience of African rivers had already made him familiar. But whereas the colour of the crocodile is dull brownish-green, this creature was of a ghastly livid white, and was fully three times the size of the largest crocodile which Aveling had ever set eyes on. Its head and such of its monstrous back as was visible above the black water were covered with innumerable scales, and down its spine ran a ridge of horny excrescences like the blunted

teeth of some gigantic saw. Its head alone was longer than a man's body, and its

terrible feature. Set high on the head below huge horny prominences, they glowed in



immense pointed jaws were armed with hooked yellow fangs nearly a foot in length. But its eyes—they were by far its most the thick gloom red as coals from the heart of a furnace, and were fixed with a malignant unwinking stare upon the man who, all unconscious of his peril, stood on the narrow ledge before the altar, still greedily absorbed in his task of gathering the golden treasure.

Aveling strove to cry out, but only a dry chatter came through his parched lips. Over-powered by the horrible sight, half suffocated by the reek of musk, he could only cling dizzily to the ledge behind him, and watch helplessly the tragedy which he was power-less to avert.

Then—it was all so rapid that eye could hardly follow—its vast webbed feet shot the monster forward, and, as a fly-catcher plucks an insect from mid-air, its long, beak-like

jaws picked Denyer from the ledge.

There rang out one hideous scream, that sent wild echoes wailing out across the lake, and beating back from the iron cliffs which bound it, then the beast drew down its prey, and, but for the sullen wave that broke over his feet, Aveling might have fancied himself the victim of some hideous nightmare.

Of a sudden his own awful danger flashed across his mind, and instinctively he turned to fly. But before he had gone three steps he stopped. What? With fortune literally in his grasp, abandon it? Return penniless, as he had come, leaving those piles of gold to glimmer for ever upon the altar in the grim keeping of their awful guardian?

No, a thousand times no! Better perish

like Denyer than turn coward.

Aveling set his teeth, and, pulling the heavy pistol from his belt, moved with noiseless steps back along the ledge towards the altar.

There on the ledge at its foot lay, scattered in wild profusion, Denyer's golden load. Aveling did not stoop to gather it, but with shaking fingers snatched up the enormous vase which stood in the centre of the altar. It was crusted with gems, and in itself as heavy as one man could carry.

With this under his left arm, and his pistol ready in his right hand, he ran rapidly back along the narrow ledge towards the mouth of

the cave.

He had almost reached it, when behind came the same rush and gurgle of parted water which he had heard before. With a gasping cry he leaped wildly for the knob of rock at the mouth of the cave. As he gained it and stumbled to his knees, there came behind him a clash like the slam of a steel door.

Whirling round, Aveling saw that the force of the huge brute's rush had brought it right up against the ledge, upon which its great gnarled forefeet were actually resting.

Lashing the water into foam with its powerful hind legs and vast tail, the creature forced itself forward in a frantic effort to reach him, while its vast jaws gaped like the mouth of

the pit.

Filled with cold fary, Aveling thrust the muzzle of the pistol almost between the double rows of curved fangs, and pulled the trigger once, twice, thrice, in rapid succession. The heavy reports crashed back from the vault of rock above, and the echoes boomed deafeningly from cliff to cliff around the crater lake. Then the monstrous crocodile rolled over, and, with a sullen plunge, sank writhing beneath the oily foam, while Aveling, turning, staggered away as fast as his shaking legs would carry him.

Still clutching his precious burden, the great gem-studded vase, he hurried onwards and upwards, and never once stopped or looked back until he had reached the summit of the cliff. Then, flinging the vase over the verge, he struggled after it, threw himself flat on his face upon the baking rock, and

lay there gasping.

When at last he was able to pull himself together and rise to his feet, it was characteristic of the man that, instead of jumping on his horse and galloping away at once from the accursed spot, he faced round coolly and once more gazed down into the depths from which he had so narrowly

escaped.

As his eyes roved across the ebony surface of the pool, now calm and placid as though it had never been disturbed, they were caught by something resembling the freshly-barked trunk of a huge tree which lay floating livid white against the black water, just outside the mouth of the cavern. For many seconds he stood staring at it, shielding his eyes with his hand from the fierce glare of the sun.

"It's the crocodile, right enough," he muttered at last in a tone of incredulous triumph. "And dead as poor Denyer himself. I wonder if the brute's got a mate?"

His lips set and he considered a moment. "No, it's hardly likely, and, whether it has or no, I'm going to risk it, especially as I've got Denyer's horse to carry the stuff back. Here goes for the rest of the treasure."

So saying, he clambered once more over the edge of the cliff, and with steady steps made his way back down the steep footway

towards the mouth of the cave.

Three weeks later, Aveling left Cape Town, bound for England, with a bank balance which many a so-called millionaire might have envied.

# HOMEWARD BOUND.

### By WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON,

Author of "The Boats of the 'Glen Carrig," "The Night Land," etc.



HE old Shamraken, sailing-ship, had been many days upon the water. She was old—older than her masters, and that was saying a great deal. She seemed in no hurry as she lifted her bulging old wooden

sides through the seas. What need for hurry? She would arrive some time, in some fashion, as had been her habit heretofore.

Two matters were especially noticeable among her crew, who were also her masters—the first, the agedness of each and every one; the second, the family sense which appeared to bind them, so that the ship seemed manned by a crew all of whom were related one to the other. Yet it was not so.

A strange company they were, each man bearded, aged, and grizzled, yet there was nothing of the inhumanity of old age about them, save it might be in their freedom from grumbling, and the calm content which comes only to those in whom the more violent

passions have died.

Had anything to be done, there was nothing of the growling inseparable from the average run of sailor-men. They went aloft to the "job"-whatever it might bewith the wise submission which is brought only by age and experience. Their work was gone through with a certain slow pertinacity—a sort of tired steadfastness born of the knowledge that such work had to be done. Moreover, their hands possessed the ripe skill which comes only from exceeding practice, and which went far to make amends for the feebleness of age. Above all, their movements, slow as they might be, were remorseless in their lack of faltering. They had so often performed the same kind of work, that they had arrived, by the selection of utility, at the shortest and most simple methods of doing it.

They had, as I have said, been many days upon the water, though I am not sure that any man in her knew to a nicety the number

of those days. The skipper, Abe Tombes—addressed usually as Skipper Abe—may have had some notion, for he might be seen at times gravely adjusting a prodigious quadrant, which suggests that he kept some sort of record of time and place.

record of time and place.

Of the crew of the Shamraken, some half dozen were seated, working placidly at such matters of seamanship as were necessary. Besides these, there were others about the decks-a couple who paced the lee side of the main deck, smoking and exchanging an occasional word; one who sat by the side of a worker, and made odd remarks between draws at his pipe; another out upon the jibboom, who fished, with a line, hook, and white rag, for bonito. This last was Nuzzie, the ship's boy. He was grey-bearded, and his years numbered five-and-fifty. A boy of fifteen he had been when he joined the Shamraken, and "boy" he was still, though forty years had passed into eternity since the day of his "signing on," for the men of the Shamraken lived in the past, and knew him only as the "boy" of that past.

It was Nuzzie's watch below—his time for sleeping. This might have been said also of the other three men who talked and smoked; but for themselves they had scarce a thought of sleep. Healthy age sleeps little, and they

were in health, though so ancient.

Presently one of those who walked the lee side of the main deck, chancing to cast a glance forrad, observed Nuzzie still to be out upon the jibboom, jerking his line so as to delude some foolish bonito into the belief that the white rag was a flying fish.

The smoker nudged his companion.

"Time thet b'y 'ad 'is sleep."

"Aye, aye, mate," returned the other, withdrawing his pipe and giving a steadfast look at the figure scated out upon the jibboom.

For the half of a minute they stood there, very effigies of Age's implacable determination to rule rash Youth. Their pipes were held in their hands, and the smoke rose up in little eddies from the smouldering contents of the bowls.

"Thar's no tamin' of thet b'y," said the first man, looking very stern and determined.

Then he remembered his pipe, and took a draw.

"B'ys is tur'ble queer critters," remarked the second man, and remembered his pipe in turn.

"Fishin' w'en 'e orter be sleepin'!" snorted

the first man.

"B'ys needs a tur'ble lot er sleep," said the second man. "I 'member w'en I wor a b'y. I reckon it's ther growin'."

And all the time poor Nuzzie fished on.

"Guess I'll jest step up an' tell 'im ter come in outer thet," exclaimed the first man, and commenced to walk towards the steps leading up on to the fo'c'sle head.

"B'y!" he shouted, as soon as his head was above the level of the fo'c'sle deck.

" B'v ! "

Nuzzie looked round at the second call.

"Eh?" he sung out.

"Yew come in outer that!" shouted the older man, in the somewhat shrill tone which age had brought to his voice. "Reckon we'll be 'avin' yer sleepin' at ther wheel ter-night."

"Aye," joined in the second man, who had followed his companion up on to the fo'c'sle head. "Come in, b'y, an' get ter

yer bunk."

"Right!" called Nuzzie, and commenced to coil up his line. It was evident that he had no thought of disobeying. He came in off the spar and went past them without a word, on the way to turn in.

They, on their part, went down slowly off the fo'c'sle head, and resumed their walk fore and aft along the lee side of the main deck.

#### II.

"I RECKON, Zeph," said the man who sat upon the hatch and smoked—"I reckon as Skipper Abe's 'bout right. We've made a trifle o' money outer the ole 'ooker, an' we don't get no younger."

"Aye, thet's so, right 'nuff," returned the man who sat beside him, working at the

stropping of a block.

"An' it's 'bout time we got inter the use o' bein' ashore," went on the first man, who was named Job.

Zeph gripped the block between his knees, and fumbled in his hip pocket for a plug. He bit off a chew and replaced the plug.

"Seems cur'ous this is ther last trip, w'en yer comes ter think uv it," he remarked, chewing steadily, his chin resting on his hand.

Job took two or three deep draws at his pipe before he spoke.

"Reckon it had ter come sumtime," he said at length. "I've a purty leetle place in me mind w'ere I'm goin' ter lie up. 'Ave yer thought erbout it, Zeph?"

The man who held the block between his knees shook his head and stared away

moodily over the sea.

"Dunno, Job, as I know what I'll do w'en ther old 'ooker's sold," he muttered. "Sence M'ria went, I don't seem nohow ter care 'bout bein' 'shore."

"I never 'ad no wife," said Job, pressing down the burning tobacco in the bowl of his pipe. "I reckon seafarin' men don't

ought ter have no wives."

"Thet's right 'nuff, Job, fer yew. Each man ter 'is taste. I wer' tur'ble fond uv M'ria—" He broke off short and continued to stare out over the sea.

"I've allus thought I'd like ter settle down on er farm 'o me own. I guess the money I've arned'll do the trick," said Job.

Zeph made no reply, and for a time they sat there, neither speaking. Presently, from the door of the fo'c'sle on the starboard side, two figures emerged. They were also of the "watch below." If anything, they seemed older than the rest of those about the decks—their beards, white save for the stain of tobacco jnice, came nearly to their waists. For the rest, they had been big, vigorous men, but were now sorely bent by the burden of their years. They came aft, walking slowly. As they came opposite to the main hatch, Job looked up and spoke.

"Say, Nehemiah, thar's Zeph here's been thinkin' 'bout M'ria, an' I ain't been able ter peek 'im up nohow."

The smaller of the two new-comers shook

his head slowly.

"We hev oor trubbles," he said—"we hev oor trubbles. I hed mine w'en I lost my datter's gel. I wor powerful took wi' that gel, she wor that winsome; but it wor like ter be—it wor like to be—an' Zeph's hed his trubble sence then."

"M'ria wer' a good wife ter me, she wer'," said Zeph, speaking slowly; "an' now th' old 'ooker's goin', I'm feared as I'll find it mighty lonesome ashore yon." And he waved his hand as though suggesting vaguely that the land lay anywhere beyond the starboard rail.

"Aye," remarked the second of the new-comers. "It's er weary thing tu me as th' old packet's goin'. Six-and-sixty year hev I sailed in her—six-and-sixty year!" He nodded his head mournfully and struck a match with shaky hands.

"It's like ter be," said the smaller man -

" it's like ter be."

And, with that, he and his companion moved over to the spar that lay along under the starboard bulwarks, and there seated themselves to smoke and meditate.

### III.

SKIPPER ABE and Josh Matthews, the first mate, were standing together beside the rail which ran across the break of the poop. As with the rest of the men of the Shamraken, their age had come upon them, and the snows of eternity rested upon their beards and hair.

Skipper Abe was speaking.

"It's harder'n I'd thought," he said, and looked away from the mate, staring hard

along the worn, white-scoured decks.

"Dunno w'at I'll du, Abe, w'en she's gone," returned the old mate. "She's been a 'ome fer us these sixty years an' more." He knocked out the old tobacco from his pipe as he spoke, and began to cut a bowlful of fresh.

"It's them durned freights!" exclaimed the skipper. "We're jest losin' money every trip. It's them steam-packets as hes knocked

us out."

He sighed wearily and bit tenderly at

his plug.

"She's been a mighty comfortable ship," muttered Josh, in soliloquy. "An' sence thet b'y o' mine went, I sumhow thinks less o' goin' ashore'n I used ter. I ain't no folk left on all thar arth."

He came to an end, and began with his

old, trembling fingers to fill his pipe.

Skipper Abe said nothing—he appeared to be occupied with his own thoughts. He was leaning over the rail across the break of the poop, and chewing steadily. Presently he straightened himself up and walked over to leeward. He expectorated, after which he stood there for a few moments, taking a short look round—the result of half a century of habit. Abruptly he sung out to the mate.

"W'at d'yer make outer it?" he queried,

after they had stood a while peering.

"Dunno, Abe, less'n it's some sort o' mist

riz up by ther 'eat."

Skipper Abe shook his head, but, having nothing better to suggest, held his peace for a while.

Presently Josh spoke again—

"Mighty cur'us, Abe. These are strange parts."

Skipper Abe nodded his assent, and

continued to stare at that which had come into sight upon the lee bow. To them, as they looked, it seemed that a great wall of rose-coloured mist was rising towards the zenith. It showed nearly ahead, and at first had seemed no more than a bright cloud upon the horizon, but already had reached a great way into the air, and the upper edge had taken on wondrous flame-tints.

"It's powerful nice-lookin'," said Josh.
"I've allus 'eard as things was diff'rent out'n

these parts."

Presently, as the Shamraken drew near to the mist, it appeared to those aboard that it filled all the sky ahead of them, being spread out now far on their bow. And so in a while they entered into it, and at once the aspect of all things was changed, the mist, in great rosy wreaths, floating all about them, seeming to soften and beautify every rope and spar, so that the old ship had become, as it were, a fairy craft in an unknown world.

"Never seen nothin' like it, Abe—nothin'," said Josh. "Aye, but it's fine—it's fine!

Like's ef we'd run inter ther sunset."

"I'm mazed—just mazed!" exclaimed Skipper Abe, "but I'm 'gree'ble as it's purty,

mighty purty."

For a further while the two old fellows stood without speech, just gazing and gazing. With their entering into the mist, they had come into a greater quietness than had been theirs out upon the open sea. It was as though the mist muffled and toned down the creak, creak of the spars and gear, and the big, foamless seas that swept past them seemed to have lost something of their harsh whispering roar of greeting.

"Sort o' unarthly, Abe," said Josh later, and speaking but little above a whisper.

"Like as ef yew was in church."

"Aye," replied Skipper Abe. "It don't

seem nat'rel.'

"Shouldn't think as 'eaven was all thet diff'rent," whispered Josh. And Skipper Abe said nothing in contradiction.

#### IV.

Some time later the wind began to fail, and it was decided that, when eight bells was struck, all hands should set the main t'-gallant. Presently, Nuzzie having been called—for he was the only one aboard who had turned in—eight bells went, and all hands put aside their pipes and prepared to tail on to the halyards; yet no one of them made to go up to loose the sail. That was the "b'y's" job, and Nuzzie was a little late in coming

out on deck. When, in a minute, he appeared, Skipper Abe spoke sternly to him.

"Up, now, b'y, an' loose thet sail. D'y think to let er grown man dew such-like

work? Shame on yew!"

And Nuzzie, the grey-bearded "b'y" of five-and-fifty years, went aloft humbly, as he was bidden.

Five minutes later he sung out that all was ready for hoisting, and the string of ancient ones took a strain on the halyards. Then Nehemiah, being the chaunty man, struck up in his shrill quaver—

"Thar wor an ole farmer up Yorkshire way."

And the shrill piping of the ancient throats took up the refrain-

"Wi' me aye, aye, blow thar lan' down!" Nehemiah caught up the story—

"'E 'ad'n ole wife, 'n' 'e wished 'er away." Then-

"Give us some time ter blow that lan' down!" came the quavering chorus of old voices. "Oh, thar Divvel come to 'im one day at thar plough," continued old Nehemiah, and the crowd of ancients followed up with the refrain-

"Wi' me aye, aye, blow thar lan' down!" Then-

"I've comed fer th' old woman, I mun 'ave 'er now," sang Nehemiah, and again the refrain-

"Give us some time ter blow that lan' down!" shrilled out.

And so on to the last couple of stanzas. And all about them, as they chanted, was that extraordinary rose-tinted mist, while above, blent into a marvellous radiance of flame colour, as though just a little higher than their mast-heads, the sky was one red ocean of silent fire.

"Thar wor three leetle divvels chained up ter the wall," sang Nehemiah shrilly.

"Wi' me aye, aye, blow thar lan' down!" came the piping chorus.

"She tuk off 'er clog, 'n' she walloped 'em all," chanted old Nehemiah, and again followed the wheezy, age-old refrain.

"These three leetle divvels for marcy did bawl," quavered Nehemiah, cocking one eye upward to see whether the yard were nearly mastheaded.

"Wi' me aye, aye, blow thar lan' down!" came the chorus.

"Chuck out this ole hag, or she'll mur-".

"Belay!" sung out Josh, cutting across the old sea-song with the sharp command. The chaunty had ceased with the first note of the mate's voice, and a couple of minutes later the ropes were coiled up, and the old

fellows back to their occupations.

It is true that eight bells had gone, and that the watch was supposed to be changed. and changed it was so far as the wheel and look - out were concerned, but otherwise little enough difference did it make to those sleep-proof ancients. The only change visible in those about the deck was that those who had previously only smoked, now smoked and worked, while those who had hitherto worked and smoked, now only smoked. Thus matters went on in all amity, while the old Shamraken passed onward like a rose-tinted shadow through the shining mist, and only the great, silent, lazy seas that came at her out from the enshrouding redness seemed aware that she was anything

more than the shadow she appeared.

Presently Zeph sung out to Nuzzie to get their tea from the galley, and so, in a little, the watch below were making their evening meal. They ate it as they sat upon the hatch or spar, as the chance might be, and, as they ate, they talked with their mates of the watch on deck upon the matter of the shining mist into which they had plunged. It was obvious, from their talk, that the extraordinary phenomenon had impressed them vastly, and all the superstition in them seemed to have been waked to fuller life. Zeph, indeed, made no bones of declaring his belief that they were nigh to something more than earthly. He said that he had a feeling that M'ria was somewhere near to him.

"Meanin' to say as we've come purty near ter 'eaven?" said Nehemiah, who was busy thrumming a paunch mat for chafing gear.

"Dunno," replied Zeph; "but"-making a gesture towards the hidden sky - " yew'll 'low as it's mighty wonnerful, 'n' I guess ef 'tis 'eaven, thar's some uv us as is growin' powerful wearied uv arth. I guess I'm feelin' peeky fer a sight uv M'ria."

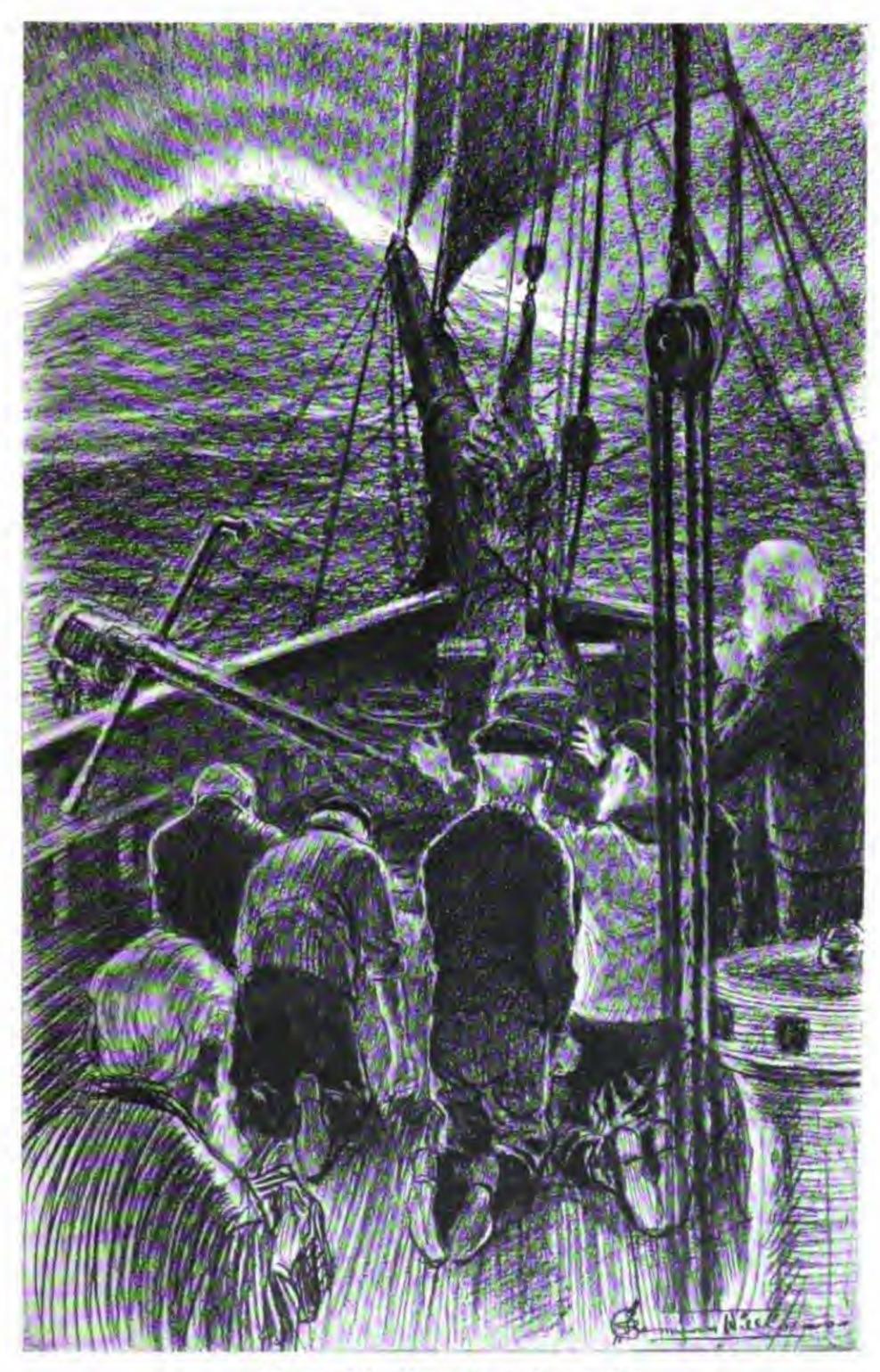
Nehemiah nodded his head slowly, and the nod seemed to run round the group of white-

haired ancients.

"Reckon my datter's gel 'll be thar," he said, after a space of pondering. s'prisin' ef she 'n' M'ria 'd made et up ter know one anuther."

"M'ria wer' great on makin' friends." remarked Zeph meditatively, "an' gels was awful friendly wi' 'er. Seemed es she hed er power thet way."

"I never 'ad no wife," said Job at this



"The rest of the old men followed his example."

point, somewhat irrelevantly. It was a fact of which he was proud, and he made a

frequent boast of it.

"Thet's naught ter cocker thysel' on, lad," exclaimed one of the white-beards who, until this time, had been silent. "Thou'lt find less folk in heaven t' greet thee."

"Thet's trewth, sure 'nuff, Jock," assented Nehemiah, and fixed a stern look on Job; whereat Job retired into silence.

Presently, at three bells, Josh came along and told them to put away their work for the day.

V.

The second dog-watch came, and Nehemiah and the rest of his side made their tea out upon the main hatch along with their mates. When this was finished, as though by common agreement, they went every one and sat themselves upon the pinrail running along under the t'-gallant bulwarks; there, with their elbows upon the rail, they faced outward to gaze their full at the mystery of colour which had wrapped them about. From time to time a pipe would be removed and some slowly-evolved thought given an utterance.

Eight bells came and went; but, save for the changing of the wheel and look-out, none

moved from his place.

Nine o'clock, and the night came down upon the sea; but to those within the mist the only result was a deepening of the rese colour into an intense red which seemed to shine with a light of its own creating. Above them the sky seemed to be one vast blaze of blood-tinted flame.

"Piller uv cloud by day, 'n' er piller uv fire by night," muttered Zeph to Nehemiah,

who crouched near.

"I reckon 's them's Bible words," said

Nehemiah.

"Dunno," replied Zeph; "but them's thar very words as I heerd Passon Myles a-sayin' w'en thar timber wor afire down our way. 'Twer' mostly smoke 'n daylight, but et tarned ter 'n etarnal fire w'en thar night comed."

At four bells the wheel and look-out were relieved, and a little later Josh and Skipper Abe came down on to the main deck.

"Tur'ble queer," said Skipper Abe, with

an affectation of indifference.

"Aye, 'tes, sure," said Nehemiah.

And after that the two old men sat among the others and watched.

At five bells-half-past ten-there was a murmur from those who sat nearest to the

bows, and a cry from the man on the lookout. At that the attention of all was turned
to a point nearly right ahead. At the
particular spot the mist seemed to be glong
with a curious, unearthly red brilliace, and
a minute later there burst upon their vision
a vast arch formed of blazing red clouds.
At the sight, each and every one cried out
their amazement, and immediately began to
run towards the fo'c'sle head. Here they
congregated in a clump, the skipper and the
mate among them. The arch appeared now
to extend its arc far beyond either bow, so
that the ship was heading to pass right
beneath it.

"'Tis 'eaven, fer sure!" murmured Josh

to himself. But Zeph heard him.

"Reckon 's them's ther gates uv glory thet M'ria was allus talkin' 'bout," he replied.

"Guess I'll see thet b'y er mine in er little," muttered Josh; and he craned forward.

his eyes very bright and cager.

All about the ship was a great quietness. The wind was no more now than a light, steady breath upon the port quarter; but from right ahead, as though issuing from the mouth of the radiant arch, the long-backed, foamless seas rolled up black and oily.

Suddenly, amid the silence, there came a low musical note, rising and falling like the moan of a distant æolian harp. The sound appeared to come from the direction of the arch, and the surrounding mist seemed to catch it up and send it sobbing and sobbing in low echoes away into the redness far beyond sight.

"They'm singin'd" cried Zeph. "M'ria wer' allus tur'ble fond uv singin'. Hark

er—\_\_\_

"'Sh!" interrupted Josh. "Thet's my b'y!" His shrill old voice had risen almost to a scream.

"It's wunnerful, wunnerful-just mazin'!"

exclaimed Skipper Abe.

Zeph had gone a little forrad of the crowd. He was shading his eyes with his hands, and staring intently, his expression denoting the most intense excitement.

"B'lieve I see 'er-b'lieve I see 'er!" he was muttering to himself over and over

again.

Behind him two of the old men were steadying Nehemiah, who felt, as he put it, "a bit mazy at thar thought o' seein' thet gel."

Away aft, Nuzzie, the "b'y," was at the wheel. He had heard the moaning, but,

being no more than a boy, it must be supposed that he knew nothing of the nearness of the next world, which was so evident to the men, his masters.

A matter of some minutes passed, and Job, who had in mind that farm upon which he had set his heart, ventured to suggest that heaven was less near than his mates supposed; but no one seemed to hear him,

and he subsided into silence.

It was the better part of an hour later, and near to midnight, when a murmur among the watchers announced that a fresh matter had come to sight. They were yet a great way off from the arch, but still the thing showed clearly—a prodigious umbel of a deep, burning red; but the crest of it was black, save for the very apex, which shone with an angry red glitter.

"Thar throne uv God!" cried out Zeph in a loud voice, and went down upon his knees. The rest of the old men followed his example, and even old Nehemiah made a

great effort to get to that position.

"Simly we'm a'most 'n 'eaven," he

muttered huskily.

Skipper Abe got to his feet with an abrupt movement. He had never heard of that extraordinary electrical phenomenon, seen once, perhaps, in a hundred years, the "fiery tempest," which precedes certain great cyclonic storms; but his experienced eye had suddenly discovered that the redshining umbel was truly a low, whirling water-hill reflecting the red light. He had no theoretical knowledge to tell him that the thing was produced by an enormous air-vortex, but he had often seen a waterspout form. Yet he was still undecided. It was all so beyond him, though certainly that monstrous gyrating hill of water, sending out a reflected glitter of burning red, appealed to him as having no place in And then, even as he his ideas of heaven. hesitated, for the last time came the æolianharp-like note of the coming cyclone. As the sound thrilled strangely upon their ears, the old men looked at one another with bewildered eyes.

"Reck'n thet's sure the harps playin'," whispered Zeph. "Guess we're on'y mis'rable

sinners."

The harp-note rose abruptly into the

bellow of the approaching storm.

The next instant the breath of the cyclone was in their throats, and the Shamraken, homeward-bounder, passed in through the everlasting portals.

## APPLES AT DROMINAGH.

Wished I aright your charms to praise, I would not sing you, in my lays, With other common fruit, that weighs its burden to the ground.

For you belong to other times, To other ways, to other climes.

You might have ripened to the chimes Of bells in Tudor days, Vibrating to the sound.

Your rounded cheeks are painted, each in hues of apricot and peach.

Ah, who would stretch his hand and reach Such beauty from its place?

Nay, long 'midst beds of hollyhocks,

Bordered around with emerald box,

Betwixt the dahlias and the stocks,

By Lough Derg's distant beach—

The whole complete, to those who know,

A picture of the long ago,

May you the garden grace.

EILY ESMONDE.

# TANTIVY CORNER

By "Q."

## Illustrated by J. R. Skelton



Sir John's end of the dinner-table the Chief Constable was frankly talking "shop" with his host and the High Sheriff; excusably, too, for all three had just come through the turmoil of a General

Election, and the ladies were keen to hear how this and that had happened. The Chief Constable spoke with a certain quiet satisfaction, to which he had a right; for trouble had been feared in one or two polling districts, and, by general consent, his police had handled things well. The High Sheriff listened, and nodded from time to time with a large gravity. Sir John interrupted here and there with a question. He was young, and had succeeded to his baronetcy, with a small but growing patrimony, a short four years ago; a modest, open-air sportsman, who took himself as Magistrate, Deputy Lieutenant, and what-not very seriously, with a genuine eagerness to learn.

At the other end of the table, where sat his young wife, Lady Vepe, having the Bishop on her right, and on her left Mr. Bagshot, M.P.—that week elected for a neighbouring constituency-her friend Miss Hemerton was telling of a book she found in a parcel from Mudie's-an "Adventure," as it was entitled, of two English ladies in Paris, who, paying a visit to the Petit Trianon, had, in broad daylight and in full possession of their senses, walked straight into the past, following alleys obliterated a hundred years since, encountering persons as long ago dead, in the end coming face to face with Marie Antoinette herself. The story was well attested. The experiences of the two ladies differed-they had not seen alike-yet the separate visions confirmed rather than contradicted each other, and some of the details noted were so trivial that no historical knowledge, however dim, could have suggested

them. Miss Hemerton, full of the story, wanted to know if it were possible that a scene imprinted on the retina of a dead woman's - Marie Antoinette's - eyes could survive, and by transference impose itself upon the vision of a couple of Englishwomen more than a hundred years later : and, if so, how ?

The Bishop cleared his throat. strange case, undeniably," said he. an ordinary way, one explains these visions subjectively—by hallucination in the person who sees. But here are two witnesses; and, if the tale be true, the vision must have been imposed from without."

He cleared his throat again and paused, considering the difficulty. "That a whole scene from the past could so reconstruct

itself---"

"But it can," put in Mr. Bagshot sharply, across his hostess. "I-er-beg your pardon, my lord"-for the Bishop was not used to having his sentences interrupted, and his

eyebrows plainly showed this.

To make matters worse, just then, in the awkward silence, the Chief Constable's voice, at the far end of the table, was heard to say : "In fact, it's with the police as with the clergy. You catch a man young and make a parson of him, or you make a constable of him, and henceforth he's 'the man in the white choker' or 'the man in blue,' as it may be—a man separated from his fellows, anyway, and wearing a uniform to remind him of it. With all respect to Thomas Carlyle, it's wonderful how a suit of clothes will operate on the human mind."

"I-I beg your pardon," repeated Mr. Bagshot, this time addressing his hostess, " but-most extraordinary !- they're saying, down there, the very thing his lordship's remark had suggested to my mind You'll forgive me, my lord?" He inclined again towards the Bishop, who bowed in return, but in a puzzled way, and with a dawning suspicion that Mr. Bagshot had drunk too much champagne after his electoral exertions.

"The fact is," continued Mr. Bagshot,



"'But what has happened to your horses? Have you broken down, too?"

"this isn't my first visit to Cornwall, and the last time—some eight or nine years ago --a mighty curious thing happened to me curious, almost, as what happened to Miss Hemerton's two ladies at Versailles. The place, if I mistake not, lies less than two miles from where we are sitting—a turning off the Truro road, called Tantivy Corner."

"Eh? What's that?" Sir John, catching the name, spoke up from his end. "Tantivy Corner? Hullo, Bagshot, what the deuce do you know of Tantivy Corner, that you speak of it so pat? The name's almost forgotten, even in these parts."

"There's a sort of wayside barn a stone'sthrow down the cross-road," answered Mr. Bagshot. "A line of stables, it used to be."

"That's right—place where Tom Grigg's grandfather kept his relays for 'The Royal Mail' and 'Self-Defence' coaches, and harnessed-up for the last run into Truro—down Probus Hill, across Tressillian Bridge, and up past Pencalenick lodge-gates at a timid average of fifteen miles an hour. Horses, men, the whole system, dead and done with, these seventy odd years! But you and I know Tantivy Corner—hey, Pamela?"

With the laugh he fired a rallying glance at his wife. But Lady Vepe was leaning back in her chair, her eyes scanning Mr. Bagshot's profile with a sudden quick

interest.

Mr. Bagshot did not observe this scrutiny.

"It really is a curious yarn," said he, resting his wrists on the table, his finger-tips meeting and making an arch slantwise over his dessert plate, as he bent forward and took possession of the company. "It happened in a Christmas Vacation. A reading-party from Christ Church, four of us undergraduates, with the Junior Censor—'the grave man, nicknamed Adam,' but actually he was called Wilkins—had hit on a retired farmhouse hard by here—Goon Moor. Our host's name, as I remember, was Tremenheere."

"One of my tenants," put in Sir John, in a queer voice. He caught his wife's eye, and it held many meanings, but chiefly it warned him to be silent. So he merely added: "Go on, Bagshot. This grows

interesting."

"His wife," pursued Mr. Bagshot, "was a capital cook in a plain way. I remember her for that, and also because she persisted in speaking of us as 'them young Cantabs from Oxford.' We were five, as I have said: 'the grave man Adam,' surnamed

"You need not beg anybody's pardon," Lady Vepe assured him. "Nobody in the neighbourhood entertained in those days."

"There was no reason, of course, why they should entertain us," said Mr. Bagshot. "We were entire strangers, and, so far as I could discover, the one thing that had fetched us to this spot was a theory of Wilkins's that, in the depth of winter, it never snowed or froze in Cornwall, in which theory, by the way, he was rather grievously mistaken. Probably he thought, too, that we should read the harder for being cut off from all dissipation. If so, he made another mistake; for the Pitling had brought a car with him—an infernal machine of the period -a Max-Prest by name, with a gearing arrangement and a thirst for petrol which had to be known to be believed."

"Right again," Sir John confirmed him.

"A more rotten bag of tricks—"

"Eh?" Mr. Bagshot fumbled and felt for his eyeglass, a habit of his when startled. "Is it possible that you, too, have made acquaintance with a Max-Prest?"

"Once," answered Sir John hastily, catching his wife's eye. "Only once in my life. I—er—used to specialise in motors,

after a fashion."

" I have never met with another. Indeed, we allowed, we four, after some experience of the beastly thing, that its inventor had palmed this one machine, the sole product of his invention, off on the Pitling and promptly died. The more it broke down, the more it intrigued us, for it never broke down twice in the same way. We spent hours on the most deplorable roads, ministering to its infirmities. Wilkins cursed it daily by all his gods; for three days out of four it played billy with our reading, and we straggled home late for dinner-afoot usually. The sums the Pitling paid for haulage promised, in the end, to endear us to the farmers, among whom we started by being infernally unpopular, for the Max-Prest could be relied upon to scare any horse it met.

"About the only occasion on which it functioned decently was the one of which

I am going to tell you.

"Unknown as we were in the county, someone must have found us out; for, early in January, a card arrived bearing an invitation to a bachelors' ball at Truro.

'Fancy Dress' was added.

" I need hardly say we had no fancy dresses with us. But we agreed that it would be fun to attend, all but 'the grave man,' who would have no truck with such frivolities. So, after putting our heads together, we telegraphed to a man in King Street, Covent Garden, for four costumes of the Regency period, which in due course arrived at Grampound Road Station, and were delivered to us. I ask you to mark this. We had sent our measurements, size of heads, etc., and everything turned up to order-curly top-hats of beaver or long-napped silk, high-collared coats, tight-fitting pantaloons, everything en règle down to such trifles as gold-headed canes, fob-chains, ribboned The costumier, in a covering eyeglasses. letter, assured us-pray mark this againthat the garments were authentic specimens of the period, refitted to our measurements and newly lined. One of the suits had descended from the wardrobe of the great Brummel. Wilkins, when we paraded before him for a dress rehearsal, hailed us as the Abstract Bucks. We had taken the precaution—since we intended to drive over to Truro in the car, which was an open oneof ordering great-coats as well. Funny, tight-waisted things they were, with three or four capes apiece, and, as it turned out, we needed them.

"For, on the afternoon of the ball, it started to snow—yes, I know something of your much-advertised Cornish Riviera—and it snowed solidly for twenty-four hours. We reached Truro, however, without mishap, the car, for once in its career, behaving beautifully. Garrymore started a theory that it had been designed originally for polar exploration, and that this accounted for the rarity of the Max-Prest chassis. We dined at 'The Red Lion,' and I have a general recollection that all four of us danced afterwards with astonishing vigour and enjoyed ourselves thoroughly."

"I remember thinking it must be like

heaven!" murmured Lady Vepe.

"Eh?" Mr. Bagshot turned half about.
"Why, to be sure, you were there, and dancing, too, no doubt. But I'll be sworn," he added gallantly, "I had not the honour

of an introduction, or I should have remembered it."

"I was not there. But please go on."

Slightly puzzled, Mr. Bagshot picked up the thread of his story. "Let me see—Yes, certainly we must have enjoyed ourselves, because it was not until two in the morning that we collected our party, got out the car, and started for home. We should have stayed to the very end had not the Pitling reported that snow was still falling, and—let alone the difficulty of steering in such weather, with all the usual features of the road effaced—a very little more of it might prove too much for the always uncertain temper of Max-Prest. So,

as I say, having changed our dancing shoes for stout boots, unstabled the car and lit the

lamps, we bowled out of Truro, the streets

of which already lay about four inches deep in snow.

"Billy, to do him justice, drove with great skill and a good deal less than his usual recklessness, while the car—as Garrymore pointed out, claiming that it confirmed his theory—really seemed to be enjoying itself. I dare say, though, that we owed as much to luck as to good management, and I have a notion that, after passing safely through Probus, Billy began to nod. At any rate, as we were rolling past Trewithian, where the plantation on our right hid the moon for a while, our off-wheel narrowly escaped a snow-covered mound of road-metal piled in the water-plate. I shook Billy by the collar and charged him with falling asleep.

"'Not a bit,' he assured me. 'Humours of the road—that's all: Christmas roysterers returning in the olden time. Would-be comic Christmas card—we're doing it life size! Highwayman at the corner—Hullo!' He put on the brake with a jerk that almost pitched us out of the car, and

brought up all standing.

"'What, in the name of-of Santa Claus-

"Our lamps, blazing down the road, lit up, at less than a dozen paces, a picture that might have come straight from a Christmas card—a broken-down post-chaise, with a horse tethered to a gate beside it, and by the chaise a solitary human figure standing, a woman, wrapped in a long dark cloak and wearing a poke-bonnet as old as your grandmother's.

"Before we could tumble out, she approached us, still in the glare of the lamps, and, as it seemed to me, with a swimming,

ghostly motion. Her face, under the eaves of the bonnet, was veiled against the weather; but I noted that her figure was slim and youthful, and her voice corresponded with it, as she said, with a catch of the breath, treating us at the same time to a little old-fashioned curtsey-

"'Oh, sirs! But what has happened to your horses? Have you broken down, too?'

"'Horses?' began Merridew-he never quick at the uptake, poor fellow. 'Oh, hush, you duffer!' said I, pushing him aside from the step and pulling off my beaver, which by this time had a white top like a yachting-cap's. 'Miss or madam,' began I, with a bow, ' have no thought about us, except that we are your servants, to help

in any way we can.'

"She showed not the smallest surprise at our costumes. 'I thank you, sirs, with all my heart. There has been a dr-readful mishap,' she explained. 'Our fore axle-pin has come out, as you see, and Jack-and the gentleman, I mean—has ridden back with the postboy to the cross-roads where the stables are, and a smithy, too, the postboy says, if he can wake up any smith at this hour-

" 'Stables? Smithy?' echoed Garrymore behind me. 'There's a posting-stables at the railway station - nothing nearer in this

forsaken land.'

"'I do not understand you, sir,' she answered, wringing her hands in the roadway and looking very forlorn. 'We saw the lights of the stables as we passed the crossroads, not five hundred yards back. Tantivy Corner is the name of the place, so the postboy said. He said, too, they were waiting there with the relay for the morning coach -" The Self-Defence."

"I heard Garrymore gasp. Stables— 'She can't relays?' muttered Merridew. mean that tumbledown barn at the corner. Why, it must have stood empty since the

year one ! '

"I could have called to them again to hush. It was evident that as yet they did not see what I saw—that we had driven a hundred years into the past and come to a halt there. The moon, overtopping the plantation, shed her rays down and across the snow-encumbered road. The Pitling had plucked out one of our head-lamps and was examining the wreck of the chaise.

"'Good Heavens!' said he, rejoining us, 'it must have come straight out of the Ark!'

"They must have reached the corner before this,' said the young lady, moving to

the gate and hoisting herself upon its second bar. 'Look, there are the stables, beyond the angle of the hedge. You can see the lights quite plainly.' And, sure enough, we could.

"'See here, you fellows,' commanded Billy, 'suppose we put forth our best strength and hoist this contraption to one side of the road. Then we might get the car past and push on to lend a hand. Here, Merridew, you and Bagshot get a lift on.'

"'But I tell you there ain't any stables!' Merridew protested. 'The place is a ruin,

and has been for these fifty years.'

"'It doesn't greatly matter just now," explained Billy, with great lucidity, 'which of us is drunk or which is sober. The point is, that we all do something, seeing the lady's in a hurry. What's the time, by the way?' He pulled out his fob-watch and held it to 'Three-thirty and a little one of the lamps. after,' he announced.

"The young woman—by her shape she was little more than a girl-wrung her hands 'And the coach is timed for ten afresh.

minutes to four!'

"'The coach, ma'am?' demanded Billy.

'What coach, ma'am?'

"" The Self-Defence," sir; and I greatly fear that dear papa will be on it. You see, Jack—he insists on my calling him Jack and I were posting to Falmouth when this dr-dreadful mishap occurred; and dear papa, who disapproves of Jack, is so irascible——'

"Billy let out a long, low whistle, but it was interrupted by the sound of voices up the Presently lanterns showed, and a minute later I had no doubt at all that we had driven into the past, as a company joined us, headed by a postillion on a harness horse and a young gentleman in travelling boots and caped overcoat, the collar of which was turned up against the snow, for the snow still fell steadily, although the wind had dropped.

"Two or three stablemen-fellows in long waistcoats and tightish corduroy kneebreeches-accompanied them, and they had brought along the smith, who promptly went down on his belly in the snow and crawled under the chaise to examine the damage. The stablemen, stooping, held their lanterns

this way or that, as he directed.

"By and by, crawling forth again, he commanded us to bear a hand and tilt the machine on its side towards the hedge. We all started to help, when somebody cried out that he could hear the coach coming.

"We strained our ears, and there was no

mistake. The snow muffled all sound of wheels, but, the air by this time being windless, the pounding of the horses' gallop was faintly audible, with a distinct clink, now and again, of the swingle-bars. To remove all doubts, of a sudden a horn sounded, very musical and clear.

"'That's to warn the relay,' said a voice.
Thirty seconds or so, and you'll hear 'em

draw up at the Corner.'

"Sure enough, in something like that space of time, the galloping ceased. I turned and saw the young man slip an arm around the lady."

"Heavens, but did you, now?" interjected Sir John, who had been listening with the

liveliest interest.

"I turned," repeated Mr. Bagshot, now intent on his climax, and not to be diverted, "and I saw the young man slip an arm around the lady to comfort her. Her shoulders heaved as she bent towards him and sobbed. They made a pretty silhouette against the glare of our lamps. They—the lamps and our car—were real, at any rate. I said a word in Billy's ear, and Billy walked up and touched the lady by the elbow.

"'By your leave, miss,' said Billy. can't say that I understand this at all, but if you two are after running for it-why, I'm one to help a fellow-sportsman. There's just room here to turn the car. You, Bagshot, stand by and give the word before she bumps astern. Nip in, miss, if you pleaseyou'll find a rug somewhere—and you, sir, might jump up forrad beside me-I'd be glad of a talk as we go along. But if it's racing the coach we are,' wound up Billy, running forward to start up the works again, 'I'll promise you that it shan't even smell us this side of Falmouth '-which, by the way, was a large promise, for Garrymore was wont to declare that the Max-Prest might be hunted on a day-old scent in any ordinary weather.

"'But I don't understand,' pleaded the young lady, very innocently. 'For where

are your horses?'

"She climbed in obediently, nevertheless, and her young man jumped for a seat in front. By this time the car was throbbing, shaking through all its length like a tramp steamer. Billy scrambled in and began to work her around. I shouted directions, all the while straining my cars to listen for the coach, if it were bearing down on us, which was ridiculous, for the noise made by the car would have drowned a brass band.

"'Straight?' queried Billy. 'What's that locking the off hind wheel?' He

jumped out in a hurry to see, when—prr-f! with a leap forward the Max-Prest took the road and fairly skimmed out of sight—it and the two innocents—leaving us there,

stuck and standing.

"Goo-oochy losh!' Billy, turning a blank face to me at close quarters, had scarcely given this expression to his feelings when a shout from somewhere up the road warned us to jump aside for the hedge, just as the coach—yes, indeed, ladies—just as the mail-coach, with horses at full gallop and the guard blowing on his horn, thundered past, splashing up the snow in our faces. It went by like a whirlwind.

"'I'll back the car, though—to the next corner!' yelled Billy above the uproar, and

fell on me hysterically.

"We ran like two aimless fools down the But the noises of car and coach died away, and pursuit was plainly impossible. We retraced our steps, and found our companions chatting with the gang of men around the chaise. They were real enough, at all events. Having wisely decided that the axle was beyond repairing-at any rate, before daylight—they walked us back to Tantivy Corner, where—still as if we were living back a hundred years—we found the stables alight with lanterns hanging by the Six horses we found there, bedded up with a plenty of fresh straw, and rum, with hot water, going in the harness-room. The rum, again, was real enough; and when we had drunk it until our skins tingled, the stablemen—aged fellows all—put us on our road to tramp it home, which we did. And what do you suppose was the first thing we saw in the roadway before the house? Why, the Max-Prest, standing there in the snow, empty, with lamps still blazing, just as solid and as innocent as a baby!"

"Yes," said Lady Vepe softly, in her silvery voice, after a silence of some moments had rewarded the climax. "Yes, it was a heavenly drive, and I don't mind telling you -now, Jack !-that my husband proposed to me in the course of it. You see "-here she turned sweetly on the astounded Mr. Bagshot-" Jack was very poor in those days; he had scarcely a penny to bless himself, still less a penny to bless a country clergyman's daughter. We were too poor —the both of us—even to attend that ball. I had no frock less than three years old; and somehow we conceived a grudge against you rich young men, whom we were too poor even to entertain. There was no reason, you will say, why we should have nursed

any grudge against you? Perhaps not; yet you might understand if you had ever known poverty - the sort that's called genteel. And, after all, we were not the only ones. Grigg, at the posting-stables, keeps two cars now-quite decent ones-and quite often hires them out four days a week. But in those days he loathed the very name of a motor, and conceived he had a grievance against your reading-party because you never hired from him. That is how he came into the plot. He had an old coach in his stables, with one or two broken-down chaises. By searching through the wardrobes at home I found most of the dresses, and Grigg hunted up a guard's horn and uniform. As for Jack, he had been learning with a motorcar firm in London, and was home for his holiday, so that part of the business came easy to him. Also, knowing the roads, it was easy for us to bring the car around to Goon Moor before you returned. But Jack behaved so sillily by the way, and the drive in the moonlight was so heavenly, that you almost caught us. As it was, we had just time to slip out and watch your discovery from behind the escallonia hedge. Then we raced back to Tantivy Corner, to help in dismantling the stables. No doubt you visited them next day, and found them forlorn as ever?"

"We did," said Mr. Bagshot.



### TO A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN DECEMBER.

DAUGHTER of May, to old December bringing
Youth and strange warmth and founts of sunny mirth!
Deep in the woodland scanty choirs are singing
Songs half forgotten of a happier earth.

Crowned not with leaves nor garlanded with flowers,
Pensive thou comest, maidenly of mien;
Soft is thy footfall in the winnowed bowers,
Loosened thy shadow-train along the green.

Minstrels have been who, born untimely, chanted Songs of the splendour of a buried day: So thou, a trouvère, passing memory-haunted, Breathest in alien clime of vanished May.

Linger, oh, linger, in thy glamour steeping
Earth, ere thou speedest through the cloudy gate;
Soon, soon thy flight, and long shall we be reaping
Sunless and songless days and desolate.

THOMAS SHARP.

### THE SPIRIT-APE

### By G. B. LANCASTER

#### Illustrated by Maurice Greiffenhagen



ROUGH the palms and the dense, twisted mangroves along the riverbank the moisture which earth had sweated off during the day dripped back again, hanging heavily in the big. scentless flower-

cups where small flies drowned themselves, and shaking the slender grasses when it fell on their tips. From the river sounded the creak of oars and the one-noted unmusical Malay cry of a couple of coolies pulling a flat-boat up towards the intake at the Shallack Mine.

Outside his hut across the compound, Barrow yawned with a half-groan and mopped his forehead.

"Ma-ling," he shouted, "bring lemons and the ice. The sahibs come."

He spoke in the dialect of that particular part of Malay, but the two white men crossing the compound heard and understood. Tufnell quickened his steps.

"Ice!" he said. "Where, in the name of all amazement, did you get ice from, you voluptuous sinner? Ice! Make her walk, Barrow! I haven't seen ice since I left the States."

"Well, this is American make. Quong Lu brought some up river last night. He'd bought it from one of your countrymen down at Porebuti. They told him it would keep him cold for ever, and I found him this morning watching it melt, and cursing himself hot enough to set fire to the whole thing. He let me buy a little—at a price. It went up in value as it went down in bulk, I fancy. Ma-ling, give the cups to the sahibs and put the tray here."

Tufnell snatched a cut lemon and squeezed it into his cup. He dashed the whisky in, poured the tepid water after, and

watched Barrow drop the ice-lumps greedily. His hands shook as he lifted it, feeling the ice against his parched lips, for his last bout of fever and ague was still heavy on him.

"Here's yours, Mac." Barrow handed the other cup. "Ma-ling, bring a chair for Doctor Sahib. Not that one - Tufnell Sahib split it last time. What's up. Tuffy?"

Tufnell put down the empty cup and flung himself into the long chair next

Barrow's.

"Nasty muck!" he said. "Even the ice isn't cold. But, sakes, it makes me homesick for the States again!"

"Blathers!" said Macintosh. "Why would ye want to be thinkin' of the States, whin it's niver the livin' ye could make out

of thim till ye lift thim at all?"

Macintosh was as Irish as his name was not. He had twinkling blue eyes either side a blunt nose, and at present he was clean-shaven, except for a fringe of sandy whisker under his chin. Tufnell wore a right-hand moustache and a left-hand sidewhisker, but to the men who looked at him there was more of the tragic than the comic in his face.

This was Barrow's idea. He had a goatee just now, and his thick moustache was brushed up. But it had gone through various changes since the night when young Cutts, still soft and fresh from England, had disgraced his manhood by an explosion of hysterical tears before the assembled multitude of his fellows. These were four-Derrett had since died — but Cutts ignored them all.

"They're all alike," he gasped-"those cursed Malays and Chinkies! I'll bet they can't tell themselves apart. And we're all alike—nothing but hair and eyes and noses. I can't stand it, I tell you -I can't stand it! Oh, if only one of you had his mouth on top, or wore his moustache as a bow-tie!"

Barrow nodded his sympathy. He knew what that camp of flat-faced, slant-eyed, greasy coolies had meant to him.

"But we have some scope for originality

in our beards," he said.

In the utter desolate monotony of life on the Shallack Mine, any new idea was a godsend. The weary men jumped at this, and for many months the coolies heard occasional bursts of laughter from the sahibs' quarters, where no such sounds had been heard for long, and saw curious sproutings and shaven patches on the sahibs' faces. Derrett was gone now, and the joke had worn thin. But no man liked to give it up, and so acknowledge that there was no humour left in him.

Tufnell's chair creaked as he tossed him-

self restlessly.

"When are we going to do something?" he demanded. "When's that new machinery coming up? When are they going to send the fellow to take Derrett's place? When are we going to get some work done? That's what I want to know."

"If askin' would answer, ye'd know this long time," said Macintosh dryly. "Bedad, man, who's tu tell ye, when there is not one

has a notion at all?"

"Well, I tell you I won't stand it!"
Tufnell sat up in sudden desperation. "I'm
sick of it all—oh, I'm sick of it all!"

He rocked himself in his chair, and Macintosh, meeting Barrow's eyes, finished

his drink and stood up.

"Ye had dreams again last night, thin, was it? Ah, come along, Tuffy darlint, an' I'll put ye to sleep aisy as a field of poppies!"

Tufnell struck out at him blindly.

"Oh, don't be a blessed fool!" he said bitterly.

Macintosh put a hand on the shaking

shoulder.

"Was it the same thing as befure on ye,

thin?" he asked gravely.

"Ah, yes!" Tufnell shuddered, staring through the dusky compound to the coolie cooking-fires blinking among the trees. "I went out—it was too hot to sleep—and I heard it call, and I saw it in the branches."

"That big ape from the divil knows where? Sure, I'll be puttin' a bullet into

it some night. Ay, will I."

"Don't I tell you it's no ape?" Tufnell sprang up. "It's human! I swear to you it's human! It's the kind of thing we've come from, and I wish we could go back to it. They have no civilisation to haunt them,

and to make them curse the day they were born!"

He was walking the dried, dusty grass with reeling steps. Macintosh hooked an arm through his and drew him towards the door.

"Sure, we'll talk of it after," he said—
"to-morrow, or next day. Or there's plinty
spare time to the back of that. Ye're woild
from want of sleep, Tufnell, man. Let's see
now if I can do annything, though I'm not
wishful tu interfere with Nature often,
moind."

Fifteen minutes later he came back alone. Barrow was still smoking and watching the thickening mists across the compound. Raucous voices and the harsh jangle of gongs sounded from the coolies' quarters. Night-birds called now and again, and the snarl of the river among the mangrove-roots seemed louder. He looked up at Macintosh with narrowed eyes, and the doctor nodded.

"Ay, well, hallucinations are common enough up here," he said. "An' why wouldn't they be? But it's none so aisy tu get the betther of thim. Ye can make no sinse out of this idea at all, Barrow?"

"None whatever. I don't much like the

look of Tuffy, old man."

"Och, bedad, he'll win through with it! We had to have our firin', did we not? The bhoy, now — he is settin' down with his dark hour at this minit."

"Young Cutts? Got one of his silent

fits again?"

"Silent, is it? Tis the back-ind of a week since I had a word from him. He sits an' looks at the wall. Did he come across tu see ye, thin?"

"No." Barrow refilled his pipe. "Mac, I've been thinking that you had better shift camp again. We could keep an eye on the mine machinery from here, and I think it is wise for us all to be together."

Macintosh twisted his big, thin body to

face the other man squarely.

"Four white men tu two hundred coolies is not over-big odds if it comes tu bein' ugly," he said. "Bhut I du not think it is there that the danger lies. It's himsilf a man has tu foight out here, an', bedad, it's precious few on 'em understhand it in toime. Ay, so."

"We got through it," said Barrow shortly.

"An' you, with the hard head like an ould pint pot tu ye, why wouldn't ye, thin? An' me tu busy wi' the coolies to be takin' up notions, glory be. Bhut those tu—we must rouse thim, Barrow, if we have to marry Cutts tu a coolie girl tu du it."

"You wouldn't think of such a thing."
Barrow sat up in alarm. "They are not bad-looking, and if you put the idea into his head——"

"Blathers! He a white man, an' a gintleman! Howly smoke, an' is this all the ice ye have? It's gone hot on me. No, there is no marriage nor giving in marriage for the white man who chooses tu make his livin' beyont the coast, an' five hundred miles tu the back of that. Well "—he lifted himself with a long sigh—"it's my best fut I must be puttin' out again. There's plinty sick among the coolies this dhry weather, an' it's glad we should be that we have not the woives an' families to go demented over, for, sure, they have more than is raisonable."

Barrow watched him tramp into the sliding malarial mists from the mangrove swamps where the mosquitoes bred. Then he turned into his hut and sat down to write his fifteenth letter to the syndicate of the

Shallack Mine.

Barrow was the eldest of this little colony of white men which lay five hundred miles by open scow up the Pe-ang River, and he was feeling his responsibilities heavily to-night. He had felt them before when Derrett died of fever in this very hut, and when Hendon, once a lieutenant in a dragoon regiment, had gone mad and disappeared. As he told Macintosh, he himself had "got through it." But he never grew accustomed to the breaking-in of the young ones. He knew how the loneliness and the great threat of the forest jungles told on them. knew how the harsh screaming of the birds jarred untried nerves, and what ghastly shapes the mangroves took in the changing lights. He knew how the little yellow noiseless men became an obsession, a living horror. He knew how the longing for one night of London or New York, one touch of a woman's lips, tore the soul out of a man for the time and left his pride unguarded.

He knew what the fever and ague did, too, and how the enforced idleness of these last six months was eating into the spirits of them all. So he worded his letter with all the venom at his command, while the coolie fires blinked at him across the empty silence

of the compound.

It was an hour before Macintosh's work was done in the coolie quarters, and another half-hour before the derricks and crushing-plant of the deserted mine showed gaunt among its naked earth-heaps. Ten months ago the machinery in the crushing-shed, after having been patched by Barrow until

it was no more than a shameless collection of scrap-iron, had finally given out, and not all Barrow's contrivances and makeshifts had been able to persuade the engines to run more than quarter-speed without the boilers bursting, or the rollers to work evenly in their broken-cogged connections. He and Tufnell had written out reports—acres of reports-and sent them down to headquarters. But the gold from the Shallack Mine had been a negligible quantity for some time, and the Syndicate were not inclined to spend money on it. They sent up an order for Barrow to patch the machinery, and the four white men had gone up with one impulse and looked over the shed again.

"Patch it," said Barrow—"patch it! Oh, great Scott, even I can't be sure what is

the original of anything now I"

And so they wrote more letters and sat

down to wait again.

Over the races and the cradles and the refuse jungle-vines were thick already, and as Macintosh's tread sounded along the track, a little grey monkey sprang chattering from a broken derrick and swung itself into a near tree-top. To Macintosh's fancy, there was something of threat in its angry tone. He shook himself with a half-laugh.

"An' it's the nice ould bhoy I am, tu be

no betther than Tufnell," he said.

There was no light in the hut which had once been Barrow's office, and Macintosh

grunted as he climbed the last slope.

"It's a foine couple the tu of thim are," he muttered. "The three, bedad, for it is Barrow's intintion tu fret himself over the notion that the coolies will be throublin' us before long. Begor, if we did bhut have a tu-three of that Syndicate up here for a week-ind, we'd sind thim back wiser! Ay, would we! Are ye there, Cutts?"

Against the open door the outline of a man showed faintly. It did not move, but it spoke, and Macintosh thanked Heaven for that. Cutts had not spoken of his free will

for ten days.

"Whom did you think it was," he said now-"the Director of the Syndicate?"

"Belike. Or that man-monkey Tufnell is for iver talkin' about."

"What man-monkey?"

Macintosh had passed into the hut and lit the hanging lamp. He turned at the sharp note in the young voice.

"Faith, I have tould ye this hundred toimes! Tufnell sees it walk whin he has the fever on him. An', bedad, with the attacks he's had lately, 'tis the strange thing tu me that he is contint with one. I'd be seein' a dozen, no less. Come an' have a play at the shticks, Cutts. Ye near got home on me last toime."

Cutts moved into the light. He was a handsome boy, for all his sullenness, and the long, drooping moustache shading his rather weak chin gave a mournful softness to his

whole face.

"Can't," he said shortly. "I hurt my

hand."

"An' what would ye be doin' that for? Let me see. Glory be tu goodness, man, what du ye mean by timptin' blood-poisonin'

on ye this way?"

He held Cutts' palm close, staring at the deep ragged tear across the ball of the thumb. The skin round the edge of it was stiffened, and Macintosh muttered under breath as he

got bandages and ointment.

"How did ye do that?" he demanded. And then, to Cutts' silence, he added: "The sinse of a tame cat settin' by the foire—that's what ye have! Stand still, now. Devil a bit of ye stirs out o' here till I'm through with ye. An' the mail is goin' down tu-morrow, Cutts. Bedad, I near forgot tu tell ye! You'll be wantin' tu wroite tu your mother. An' what will she say to the fist ye will be wroitin'?"

Cutts laughed shortly. His face was drawn

with the pain of Macintosh's handling.

"I'll tell her I ricked my wrist playing

tennis," he said.

"Tennis?" Macintosh looked up in amaze.
"Is it the same throuble on ye as with

Tufnell, thin?"

"D'you think I'd tell her what it's like up here?" The boy's voice was bitter. "She's an invalid, and she thinks about me all day long. Do you imagine I'd let her have this to think about?" He glanced round the empty, desolate hut, with the broken chicks at the end leading through to the bedrooms. "I am not quite such a cad, I hope."

"What do ye tell her, thin?" asked Macintosh half diffidently. But something seemed to have broken down the dam of

Cutts' long silence at last.

"I tell her about all the people I meet the jolly girls I play tennis with, and the fellows who lend me polo ponies. And I tell her about the dances I go to, and the swimming matches we have. Oh, lots of things!"

The Pe-ang was full of alligators up here, and the only dancing was done by dead leaves in a wind. Macintosh rubbed his

nose as he turned away.

"I'm not sayin' that your imagination is any more legitimate than Tuffy's," he said; "bhut if the tu of ye will be believin' what is not the truth, thin it's mighty glad I am that your attack has taken ye so peaceablelike, Cutts."

Two days later Barrow called Macintosh

aside.

"That ape has been seen in the compound," he said. "One of the foremen told me that it was a 'spirit-ape,' and it had come for a white man. It's a common superstition, I understand."

Macintosh felt a chill across his shoulders,

and it made him angry.

"Indeed? An' would he be tellin' us

which one the gintleman wants?"

"It will probably be the lot, unless we can clear this up. The fellow was green with fear, and they'd send us all into the next world sooner than stay scared. Tong Lip as good as hinted it."

"Arrah, what's the matter with powder an' shot, thin? I'll have that frind of Tuffy's tu-night, an' stretch his skin between

trees tu-morrow."

"Wait a minute!" Barrow dropped his voice. "Tong Lip's description was like Tuffy's. He said it walked like a man, and its arms were short, though it swung itself into the trees like a monkey. It struck me—don't laugh—but it struck me—You know, Hendon's body was never found."

"Ye mean—" Macintosh bit at his thumb in silence. Then he lifted his shoulders with a kind of shudder. "It is possible," he said. "Faith, is there aught that is not possible in this ould rogue of a world? We will watch, thin. Bhut if there is no other way, it will be the rifle, Barrow. Sh-h-h! Ye must remimber that the manhood went out of Hendon this twelvemonth an' more. An' if there is some crature to quit out of this, it must be him before there is harm done."

"Harm!" Barrow looked startled. "I

hadn't thought of that."

"Had ye not? Well, I had. What would he be here for, else? It's lucky we will be if his is the first loife goin' out of here. Cutts an' I will shift camp tu-noight, an' ye will sit up with me. We will not tell the others. They are bhut bhoys, annyhow."

The memory of that night's watching only left Barrow with his life. And yet it was nothing to a night which came after. But the sickly paleness of dawn was over the

compound before Macintosh lifted from where he lay by the open door and touched Barrow's knee.

"Would ye conthrive tu look?" he

whispered. "Tu, an' no less!"

It seemed no more than the flicker of tree - shadows across the compound, but they leapt and darted and ran back and forth as tree-shadows never did. There was no sound in the whole world, and in the grey hush and the flicker of that noiseless life Barrow shivered with sweat on his forehead. Macintosh spoke.

"I du not know what is the one, bhut the other is a man—I saw the skin glisten. Will

ye come-now?"

He dropped into the shadows and wriggled away. Barrow followed, feeling physically sick. So many years among the ingrained superstition of the East had not left him where it found him.

A scream split up the silence, rocking through the trees and echoing along the river. Tufnell burst out through the hut door, with livid face and eyes contracted by horror.

"I saw it again!" he stuttered. "It looked in at the window! Mac, Barrow, I saw it! Oh, why did you give me that sleeping-stuff, so I couldn't get up at once? I thought I'd have died! I saw it!"

The flickering shadows had gone at the first sound, and the two men had Tufnell by the arms. They swept him back to the

hut and shut the door.

"Aisy! Would ye wake the whole camp on us?" cried Macintosh. "Ye saw it, did ye? An' ye'd had the sinse of a white mouse ye'd have seen it for the last toime! Barrow an' I were after the gintlemin with the rifles then."

"But you couldn't have shot it. It — it isn't human; its eyes showed that. You couldn't have killed it. But it will kill me if it comes again. Don't leave me, you fellows—don't leave me!"

"Begor, we will see if it is apt tu be human tu-morrow night," said Macintosh cheerfully. "Ye saw the one only, thin?"

"How many more do you want? Oh, you fellows, you fellows, I must get away from this place! I shall die if I stay here - I shall die!"

"Blathers!" said Macintosh unconcernedly, and tucked him into bed. But when the camp roused in the morning, a very real fear roused with it. A coolie boy had been found dead by the river, and Macintosh's examination proved that he had been strangled.

"The min putt it down to that ould ape," he said, "which is just where it should be, of course. Bhut if it takes another life, ours go with it. Du you fellows understand that? They will not have anny thricks played on them, these coolies."

He looked round the table, where the four white men were breakfasting off muddy fish and sodden bread. Barrow nodded brief assent. Tufnell shuddered and pushed his plate aside. The constant fever attacks had

sapped his nerve.

"Well, let us get through and be done with it," he said. "We can only die once, thanks be."

Young Cutts laughed, tipping his chair back. He had torn the bandage from his hand, and it showed swelled and blackened.

"Only once?" he said. "Up here we die every day. We're dead to everything every day, aren't we—the men we knew, and the women we loved, and the games we played? I'm younger than you, but I'd begun to learn what life was. Now I've learnt what death is. Tuffy was right when he said that the tree-men and the cave-men had the best of it. They lived and they fought and they died, but they didn't think. That hell is reserved for us civilised men. Oh, if only we needn't think! If only we could get back to their day and stop thinking!"

He stood up abruptly and went out.

Macintosh stared after him.

"Faith, the youth of this assembly makes loife clane an' cheerful for us older min," he observed. "Have ye got anything tu be

sayin', Tuffy?"

"If you had soul enough to feel at all, you'd be hipped, too." Tufnell pushed his chair back. "I suppose you'll want us to atend that funeral, will you? You don't do things by halves."

Macintosh's laugh followed him out, but the Irishman's face was grave as he

bent over to Barrow.

"What would ye be lettin' on that the second thing was?" he asked. "One was a man, an' it was a man did the stranglin'. Bhut the other? An' is it the other that froightens Tufnell an' the coolies? An' whoy du they see bhut the one?"

"The devil knows!" said Barrow, and went away troubled, to prepare for the funeral of the coolie boy and for the after pacification

of the camp.

Macintosh searched for footprints on the drying weed and the caked mud by the naked mangrove roots, where great land-crabs backed away with snapping claws. But he found the footprints of men only, and the smell of decay and of over-ripe fruits followed him back to that solemn service before the ranks of yellow-brown men whose stolid indifference hid a threat that the white men fully guessed at. If the "spirit-ape" was not content with this, then it was a white life that he

had come for, and he should have it.

The camp kept its own watch that night kept it with the sound of gongs and tom-toms and the unmusical Malay singing. It fell asleep at last, exhausted by its efforts. But in the intense silence which followed, Macintosh woke suddenly in the belief that a clammy hand had touched his breast. He sprang up and looked from the window. The compound was seething in the white mist of dawn, and the trees beyond it lifted in huge disintegrated masses. In the mist two things moved—shapeless, almost colourless at times, then vaguely outlined in somewhat human form. They seemed to be dancing noiselessly there with the mist in the sundried compound, and Macintosh felt the prickle of horror up his spine and along the nape of his neck. Tufnell's words came to him again: "You can't kill it! I tell you it isn't human. You can't kill it!" He reached over and took his rifle.

"Be jabers, I'll thry, annyhow!" he said, and went out, ghost-like and silent in his

pale pyjamas.

Which was the thing Tufnell and the coolies saw, and which was reserved for hirdself and Barrow, he did not know; but in a few minutes the rifle would answer that question. The mist was thick as he crawled round the compound rim. Near the huts he halted, trying to dredge through it with his keen eyesight. Then something dropped on him from behind, gripping his throat with eager, strong fingers. Its weight was heavy on him—too heavy for him to throw it off or to twist. He struggled, feeling the sweat spring on his skin and the light dance and freckle and darken before his eyes. Then sense left him and he lay still.

Barrow knelt over him when he woke, and Barrow's face was grim. "You're not the only one who was called for last night," he said. "They got a woman in one of the river huts, and she's dead. Yes, you're all right. Lipi Tat found you and helped bring you back. You cured his wife last week. But there are plenty who would have been glad to stick you where you lay. There is going to be a life for a life over

this, old man."

"There shall be." Macintosh sat up,

rubbing his throat. "It was a human caught me, an' whin I get the killin' of him tu-night, sure, I'll be apt tu du it in a way he will not loike!"

"If you don't do it to-night, you won't do it at all," said Barrow significantly. "Here's a deputation now. I expected it."

"Um-m!" grunted Macintosh, getting on his feet. "Tell tu thim, Barrow, that I am going tu settle the hash of that ould ghost tu-night, fur sure. Tell thim that I have got medicine that will du it, bhut they must keep each one in his house, or they will be apt to find themselves with the loss of their own lives, for my medicine is strong. An', bedad, that's thruth! How can we go shootin' by an' large with them streelin' all over the compound?"

Barrow translated, and the coolie spokesman answered politely that medicine would not kill a spirit-ape. Macintosh grunted again.

"Ah, it's the outrageous old bhoys they are for common-sinse! Let me at 'em!"

For a full half-hour the two white men talked to the deputation. They had seen the half-hid knives in the yellow-brown hands, and the half-hid threat in the cunning flat faces. But without that they knew well that their lives were not worth the paper their birth certificates were written on if they could not, in Barrow's language, "put up a bluff that would stand."

The men retired at last, surly and unsatisfied, and Barrow called in Cutts and

Tufnell, and shut both doors.

"It's come to this," he said. "If there's another death to-night, the coolies will fly off the handle. It will be a clean wipe-out, and I don't much blame them. Now, shall we get a scow and make a bolt for it—there's just the chance that we may get away—or shall we see the thing through? I have no right to endanger your lives, but I'm not keen on knuckling down. What do you say?"

Cutts said nothing. His "silent fit" had returned, and he sat sullenly nursing his hand. Tufnell said a great deal, and

Macintosh looked at him.

"Begorra, it's amazin' the amount of wit ye haven't got!" he said. "There is not one of your plans could hould up longer than your breath is blowin' it. A pleasint lot of good ye are, an' with Cutts tu the back of ye yet! Let me see that hand of yours, Cutts. Ah, what have ye been at, at all, at all, tu make this of it, bhoy?"

Cutts yielded up the swelled, inflamed hand indifferently. His eyes were tired and

strange. Then he spoke suddenly.

"They were lucky beggars, those tree-men,

you know. They couldn't think!"

"Ah, you an' your thinkin'!" cried Macintosh, in exasperation. "There'll be none of us thinkin' tu-morrow if we don't think tu some purpose now. I will be stayin' with you, Barrow, an' we have tu revolvers an' three rifles, tu say nothin' of an ould duck-gun. The others must do as they best will. An' though I cannot promise tu thim a long life, sure, it may be merry."

"Oh, of course, we'll have to stay," said Tufnell, shrugging. "We can't show funk

before a set of beastly coolies."

"Remimber ye that tu-morrow mornin'," said Macintosh grimly. "Cutts, if ye take the bandage off again, ye'll be a dead man with tetanus within the week belike. Shall we sthroll along out an' see how lies the

land, Barrow?"

They gave the result of their inspection at the midday meal. It was not encouraging. The women were burning joss-sticks and praying their gods in mortal fear of the night; but the men were standing in sullen groups, and they looked aslant with muttering whispers as the white men went by. Tufnell thrust aside the dried goat's meat and the half-rotten bananas, and dropped his face in his hands.

"Oh, what's the good of praying?" he said. "They don't expect their gods to

answer, do they?"

"Presumably," said Barrow dryly. It was long since he had prayed—until the last two days.

"They are fools," said Cutts sharply. "If prayers could do anything, my mother would

have had me out of this long ago."

"Well, we'll probably all be out of it by this time to-morrow," answered Barrow, and Cutts laughed as he left the room. But

that laugh haunted Barrow.

He spoke of it to Macintosh that night, when the two sat waiting in the silence for the coming of the Thing. Across the compound, noise had died out where the coolies had shut themselves into their huts. Tufnell and Cutts had gone to bed long ago —Cutts with indifference and Tufnell with half-shamed apology.

"I would be no use, you know," he had said. "If I saw that thing again, I'd go mad, I think. I couldn't shoot at it, and I don't think there's any earthly use in your trying. I—I feel that it isn't a living thing, you know."

"If ye should maybe feel the grip of his paws on your throat, ye'd feel different, I'm thinkin'," said Macintosh. "Bhut be off. Two of us can fix him, an' plinty, tu."

Barrow spoke little during those long hours in the dreary, close hut. Once he said: "Shall we see the two again, I wonder?"

And Macintosh answered: "Faith, I know which I'm putting dayloight intu if we du."

And a little later Barrow said: "I'm rather anxious about young Cutts, you know. I believe he is half off his head sometimes."

To this Macintosh retorted: "Ah, it's a mighty lot of throuble you'd be meetin' if all that you were lookin' for came your way." And then they were silent, with the chill of dread and mystery on them, and the dark of night about them drifting imperceptibly into the pallor of dawn.

The trees were shaping into darker blots on the dark when Macintosh gripped Barrow's

shoulder.

"I see them, bedad," he said. "Tu, there are, an' that's thruth. Ah, ye divils!"

He flung his rifle forward and a double shot rang out. Barrow heard a scream, high, shrill, and unearthly—it curdled his blood—and then he saw Macintosh leap over the low window-sill, slipping in fresh bullets as he ran. Cries and curses of confusion came from the coolie quarters, and Barrow shouted to them—

"Follow the Doctor-sahib! He has killed the beast! He has killed it!" And then he,

too, ran on into the night.

Along the trees sheltering the river, Macintosh followed what seemed like the scrambling and crashing of more than one body. The sounds came out of the black dark among the upper branches, and a thin, querulous thread of sobbing underran the other noise. Macintosh set his lips grimly as he heard it. For he could swear that that sound was human. In the tangling banyan roots that made a lattice-work before the river he stopped suddenly. Overhead the Thing had halted also. There seemed to be one only, and it was evidently crouched in the branches, complaining in low, wordless mutters. Macintosh lifted his voice.

"Come down, or I'll shoot!" he cried.

"Will ye come, thin?"

For what seemed an eternity he waited. Then, with an unspoken prayer, he fired.

There was a gesticulating and everthickening crowd of coolies round the still thing on the ground when Macintosh thrust out to meet Barrow. He put his hand on Barrow's arm and turned him away.

"Come back," he said. "They will bring him—it in. We will, maybe, see the ape no more, Barrow. It has got the white loife

for which it came."



"He put his hand on Barrow's arm and turned him away."

"Then it was Hendon?" whispered

Barrow.

"No." Macintosh looked straight forward into the grey dawn. "No, it was Cutts. He has been clane and crazy this month past, although ye did not know ut. I was lookin' for something to happen, bhut I did not expect this. An' what that other was that came for him, I du not know. Perhaps we will not know now."

They buried young Cutts that afternoon, and through the night following Tufnell slept peacefully. His eyes were clear and sane when he spoke to Macintosh of the

matter some days later.

"I want to tell you that I've been a fool, Mac," he said.

"Sure, ye need not putt yesilf tu the

throuble," said Macintosh politely.

"I've been thinking," said Tufnell, "that it must have been only Cutts all the time. I said it wasn't human, but a man is hardly human when he's mad, is he?"

"Far from it," said Macintosh, glancing down at the letter which he was writing to

young Cutts' mother.

"And, of course, he didn't look human with nothing but those monkey-skins tied round him. The coolies think the same now. It was only that old yarn about a spirit-ape that scared them. And, of course, nobody has seen anything since—since Cutts went."

"Of course not," agreed Macintosh. But his keen glance followed Tufnell out with something of curiosity in it. "Then it was only Cutts they saw," he said. "And whoy is the other reserved for Barrow and me only? An' is it both of us have seen it again, I would well like to know? Bedad, I ixpected tu see ut standing with the three of us at the bhoy's grave."

And then he finished his letter.

"To prove to you the esteem in which your son was held up here," he wrote, "I can assure you that every white man within a hundred miles was present at the funeral. He will be much missed on the tennis and the polo ground, and a big entertainment which was to have taken place has been postponed indefinitely in honour of his memory. I am requested by his many friends to assure you of their deep sympathy and regret."

He addressed the envelope and licked it down. Then he glanced round the comfortless room, with the broken chicks and the dirty floor. Across the compound Barrow was walking with head bent, and Macintosh

knew what he had come to say.

"Yes, I saw it again last noight," he said, as Barrow came in—"same as yesilf."

"It-perhaps it was only shadows in the

compound," said Barrow.

"Bhut ye know that it was not, and so do I. Then what was it?"

"I've been thinking that—well, you know that all things seem possible up here——"

"If ye have a theory at all, out with it, and I will not laugh at ye. Faith, in this quare ould life of ours, who is tu say what is truth and what is not?"

Barrow lowered his voice, and even through the quick dusk which was filling the room, Macintosh saw that he looked shamefaced.

"Cutts was always longing to go back to the beginnings of our race—to the day when we couldn't think. We don't know what we came from or to what we go, and if it could be possible for the past to incorporate itself with the present under conditions which invited the fusion, then—then I think Cutts let himself be possessed by the spirit of what was once our life."

"Glory be tu goodness!" said Macintosh, staring. "Du ye know what ye are saying

at all ? "

"You and I have seen what we were and what we are playing together in the compound," said Barrow. "For some reason which I can't explain, Tufnell and the coolies could only see the—the other while it was possessing Cutts. For some reason which also I can't explain, you and I see a dim shape in the compound still. Is it the essence of all that was savage and primitive and enduring in our race, waiting for another man to give it a home—as Cutts did, and perhaps Hendon?"

He stopped abruptly, and there was silence -a long silence, which Barrow broke himself.

"Of course, you can call it rot-" he began, and then Macintosh stood up with a

quick movement.

"I du not," he said—"no, I du not. Bhut we will keep this matter tu ourselves, Barrow. An', sure, we will attimpt to kape that ould ape disimbodied for long enough tu discourage him well. An' we will watch Tufnell."

"And ourselves," said Barrow. Then he laughed. "What would the fellows at home think to hear us talking like this?" he said.

"They haven't lived here," answered Macintosh, and the two men stood in silence, watching the mist crawl and lift among the mangroves where the edges of the night touched, sickly warm and black.

## VISION

### By W. DOUGLAS NEWTON

#### Illustrated by Charles Crombie



above the quay-side
like the great
curtain - wall of a
fortress. She was a
brave ship, painted
black and red and
white, and her two
huge funnels were
buff. About her
was the quickening

music of hissing steam. Men went into her and came out of her, moving quickly up and down the gang-planks. Derrick-arms, swinging as if by magic, sent bales dropping like giant spiders, swiftly and without noise, into the huge depth of her holds. From her side sprang eternally gushing jets of water, and about her was the heady smell of the sea, the salt tang and engine oil, the faint reek of tar and the clinging odour of iron.

Xavier Bermingham looked up at the ship and felt how small he was. He felt, too, that passionate tug at the heart that comes when great ships lie near and the wide sea calls from the offing. But, more than any of these things, the memory of his dream came to him and stirred him so poignantly that he felt he must cry out.

The shipping clerk at his elbow grinned, and said with a proprietorial accent—

" Fine boat, eh? She's our crack."

"She's wonderful," said Xavier—" wonderful!" Somehow her wonder was mixed with the wonder of his dream, and he was wrung with pain and pleasure in a way altogether disturbing.

"She's bound for the Plate," said the clerk. "Lisbon, y'know, Canaries, Rio, Monte Video, and then Buenos Aires.

Rattling good trip."

"Splendid trip," breathed Xavier. His scraggy figure was quivering. Why was it that the name "Rio" made his blood take fire? Was Rio in the dream? There were no names in the dream, but somehow

Rio played with the vibrating strings of the heart as a bow plays upon the gut of a violin.

"Come along," jerked the clerk. "We'll go over her. You must see her palm lounge. It's the best thing of its kind." The masterat-arms nodded and let them by as they reached the gang-plank. Xavier mounted The smell of the sea and of ships caught him as he came to the deck. The wonderful glamour of his dream seemed to be of that smell, and to be pouring in upon him and overwhelming his senses. The ship was calling to him, and the sea. His dream seemed to clamour: "I am here. I am here. This is the way to me. Come! Come!" Xavier trembled with the passionate appeal of this urgent voice. The shipping clerk was speaking-

"Funny thing, but I can go on her if I like. Fact—they want me to go. The ship's clerk was taken ill this morning, and they're rushing about like billy-o, looking for

another."

"Oh!" said Xavier, in his deep voice.

"Oh!" And his dark Spanish-looking eyes said; "What luck—what splendid luck!" The shipping clerk made a tiny grimace

answering that look.

"They don't take wives," he said, "and I'm married. I'd like to go, but I can't leave home. It's rough luck, but there it is. They're wild about it. Y'see, it ain't easy to get a chap at short notice." He stopped Xavier at a door. "This is where I'd pig." They looked into the cramped but cosy cabin. "Rather comfy, eh?"

Xavier looked in. The workmanlike compactness of the cabin made him shiver with desire. How it pulled him, that cabin! And how his dream rose up about him like an enrapturing and enervating perfume, weakening resistance, bidding him "Come! Come!" Already he had forgotten the ledger desk he had won his way to through seven years of steady

grinding; already he had forgotten the City, his two rooms in Camberwell, and the girl who he fancied would marry him as soon as she became tired of music-halls and Cinderella dances and afternoons on the river or at Earl's Court. He remembered his dream only, and all the quick colours of it. His dream seemed to be shrined in that little poky, cosy cabin. The shipping clerk was telling him how "soft" the job was, what an easy and gay time the possession of a wife prevented him having. Xavier heard, but heard it through the veils of glamour.

A round, thick man came stamping towards them along the passage-way. The gold braid on his coat told that he was an officer, the look of determined good humour on his face proclaimed that his rank was purser. As he drew level, he smiled like a

man suddenly free of worry.

"Ah," he cried, "you've changed your mind, then, Fletcher? You are going to sail with us to-day, after all?"

The clerk shook his head.

"Sorry, Mr. Burke. I'm not. I wish I could."

The purser frowned. He turned from the clerk and fixed on Xavier a glance both

questioning and appraising.

"You've brought this young man along, instead," he said startlingly. "That's tophole." He spoke to Xavier, his eyes genial after his survey. "I say, we're in an awful mess—terribly behind, ye know. Could you—"

Xavier heard the shipping clerk gasp at the purser's mistake; something within himself seemed to gasp, too. But it was a weak, feeble something, swaddled in the veils of the enormously distant past of yesterday. It was not of him; it was behind him. All that he felt now was the glowing passion of his dream, the aching pull of the sea and of ships; and all he heard was that something calling him, calling him with a siren's voice from across the seas. As the purser spoke and looked at him with his jolly, questioning eyes, he moved one step forward, as though separating himself for ever from his old life, and a queer, firm voice issued from his lips-

"I'll get to work at once, sir," he said.

And Fletcher gasped again.

"Oh, good man!" laughed the purser.
"That's the style. It's a rush, though.
What about gear?"

Fletcher, in amazement, was stuttering:
"I say-I say, old man-" Xavier's

eyes came round to Fletcher, beating down all explanation, all argument.

"Fletcher will see my landlady and get her to send along my gear," he said calmly.

"I say—I say, old——"stuttered Fletcher.

"A tin box and a Gladstone bag," insisted

Xavier. "I'll give you some cash to square
her."

Fletcher fell back a step. "You're really

going, then?" he cried.

And Xavier Bermingham answered, with a fine note in his voice, a fine light in his eyes: "I'm really going." But he was saying to something in his heart, not "I'm going," but "I'm coming! I'm coming!" He said to the purser: "I'll be a bit green to begin; this is my first berth aboard ship. But I've worked my way up through the books of a big London firm from office-boy to ledger clerk. I'll soon get the hang of things."

"Oh, rather," said the purser, who was quite pleased. "It isn't at all hard. But I say, Fletcher, could you show him the ropes? Half an hour will do it. I'm so

infernally rushed."

Fletcher showed Xavier the ropes. But he started by protesting and arguing when they were alone. What about the job in London? he wanted to know.

"I'm chucking it," said Xavier. "I've always hated it, and I'll chuck it. I'll write

a letter."

Fletcher went on protesting. Even as he coached Xavier in ship's clerk work he protested.

"I can't understand it," he cried. "I don't like it, old man. It's madness chucking a

good, certain job for this."

"I've always hated it," answered Xavier.

"And I've got to go—I've got to go!"

The rich emotion of his dream had kindled knowledge within him, and he knew that he was right.

"Mad!" cried Fletcher. "Mad!" He sought in his mind for explanations. "It's the mad Irish blood in you," he affirmed

decisively.

"Perhaps," said Xavier. "Perhaps something deeper. There's Spanish blood in me, too—Armada blood. You can see that in my skin, in my eyes. A lot of Irishmen are like me, especially Irishmen who came from seaboard towns. My grandfather came to England from a scaboard town. Perhaps the South's pulling me."

"Hey?" cried Fletcher. He didn't

understand at all.

"If there is Spanish blood in me,"

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explained Xavier, speaking slowly, as though more desirous of piecing together the meaning of his dream than of convincing Fletcher—"if there's Spanish blood in me, then it is the blood of a seaman, a rover one of the men of the Armada, you know. Perhaps that man sailed the South Seas, knew them, felt the pull of 'em. Perhaps that man did something there-" He glanced at the shipping clerk. Fletcher was gazing at him with the gaze of a man who was listening to the talk of an amiable lunatic. Fletcher's agnostic glance killed all thought of confession. No, he could not tell his dream to a man like that. He ended lamely: "It's just my idea of it. One has to explain how one gets a pull like this. Nothing in the idea, probably."

"It's idiotic," commented Fletcher. "The whole business is idiotic." He realised at last the utter futility of reasoning. "I'll get your gear," he said. "You've got the hang of this job now. I suppose the letter to your firm will be ready when I get back?"

He went away with an air of injury.

That night the liner was working down the French coast in calm weather, and in his bunk Xavier was dreaming his dream.

It was the same dream, the old dream, and he knew every phase of it, but, for all that, it was new. It was more vivid, more real; its bright colours were more translucent, more quickening. It was not that there was anything fresh to see, only he seemed to see the old details better. It was as though he had come closer and could see them with a keener eye, a finer sense of

appreciation.

It was ever the same dream. He could not recall when it had first come to him, though it must have been in infanthood, probably when he was two or three. As he had dreamed then he had dreamed many times since, sometimes once or twice a month, sometimes only once in a year. There had been one period when he had dreamed it almost every night for six weeks. It was when he had left his school and stood on the lip of life, no longer a boy and not yet a man, a time when all the winds of romantic desire, of the need of a larger, braver existence blew through the chambers of his soul and fought with loathing the impending doom of a City clerkship. As he wrote letters in answer to advertisements, the dream enfolded him, filling him with longing, filling him with revolt. When he went to interview prospective masters, he used to hang over London Bridge, watching the shipping with the glamour of his familiar vision glowing within him and wringing his soul with an

intolerable yearning.

When he had obtained a situation, he still dreamed, but more and more rarely as he settled down in the groove of humdrum work. Rarer and rarer grew the vision, until it left him, as he thought, for ever, but actually only for two years. He had by now risen to a semi-responsible post, and was gaining some pleasure from his work and enough money to enjoy himself after his work was done. His dream seemed dead in those years, or, at least, obliterated by pleasure. But latterly—latterly the dream had returned.

Life had become stale, work had staled, his pleasures had staled. His parents had died, and he had moved into "diggings" and all their loneliness. His "girl" even had staled. She had been, after all, merely a means to alleviate the general staleness of existence. She had helped him for an hour or two to forget his forlorn state; she was but an accessory in his search for lost emotions. He had never loved her; she had merely attracted him. Indeed, in the last six months she had been slipping away, failing to hold him, as the rest of his everyday life was ceasing to hold him. In this atmosphere of bleakness his dream had come back to him, cheering him, warming him with its richness.

It was always the same dream, and it was a strange dream for a little London clerk to have. Xavier Bermingham, in spite of his unusual names—which had come out of Ireland with his grandfather—was not a romantic figure. He was small and rather scraggy; he was built in a style that tailors find impossible to ameliorate with clothes. Apart from his dark skin and the nervous brightness of his dark eyes, he was profoundly usual and commonplace. Yet his

dream was unusual enough.

Xavier Bermingham went to bed a clerk, yet, when he woke to his dream, he was in a kingdom of vision utterly different to anything a clerk could know. Here in his dream he stood in a large open space, set, as in an amphitheatre, amid trees. The trees were enormous beyond his knowledge, and they rushed up with an extraordinary smoothness to an immense height before breaking out into a canopy of foliage. Some of this foliage was green, some of it copper, some but dingy brown, but much shone like the jewelled heads of giant hat-pins, with blooms vivid beyond everyday imagination,

of heliotrope and scarlet and cream and gold. The sky beyond and above the flowers was so bright that it looked like a glittering blue enamel surface into which this jewellery of blooms had been exquisitely set. There was over all a sunlight brighter and harder than he had ever seen outside the callous limelit

noon of the stage.

And the trees were only accidents of setting. The marvel of the dream lay in the open space and what went forward in that space. In the centre of the clearing, looking flat, like a thing stamped from card, against the ramparts of the trees, was a small, shining building. Xavier had come to think of this building as a temple, and that, probably, was what it was. It was built in a thick, resolute style, suggestive of the many views he had seen of Egyptian temples. On its walls were numberless methodical arrangements of bitingly tinted paintings, flat men, flat horses, flat women, flat vases, and the rest, all done in the square and angular way of Egyptian hieroglyphics, only, like the temple itsel., not quite Egyptian. square door of the temple opened into a gloom so deep that it seemed backed by a solid wall of black plush.

On the steps of the building, and on the floor of the clearing before the steps, was a group of men, and these men enacted a

drama both startling and ghastly.

At first, and it was always the same, there appeared to be some sort of quarrel going on between the men on the steps and the men before the steps. There were three men on the steps, and as they were dressed in loose robes coloured and stencilled in a vivid, barbaric manner, Xavier named them priests. These priests were barring the way of the five men before the steps, and they did so with every symptom of violent anger.

Xavier could more easily place the five men who strove to force their way into the temple. They were Europeans, and, from the look of them, Southerners, possibly Spaniards. From their dress and his knowledge of the illustrations of boyhood fiction, he dubbed them pirates—pirates such as sailed the Spanish Main in the days of old, but not quite pirates in the ordinary They had not the authentic cutthroat air, they did not appear blackguards; their clothes were richer, more tasteful than the gaudy clothes of picture-book pirates, and the men had an air. He did not understand what that air was, but, all the same, he knew that these men were not men of coarse fibre. Somewhere in his boyhood he had met with the phrase "gentleman adventurer"; from that day he had instinctively called these men "gentlemen adventurers."

These five men pressed forward up the steps, quite unmoved by the angry vehemence of the priests, and the priests became more angry and more violent. The quarrel became a scramble, and in a flash it leapt to action

—swords were out.

This part of his dream was as unvarying as a cinematograph film. It began with a sword flaming in the sun like a band of white light, and one of the five jerking backwards, bumping down the steps, and then remaining still in an awful and angular heap. At once another of the men slipped and went swaying down the entire flight before he recovered balance; a patch of blood-drops gathered, shining like garnets, on this man's brow. The three others fired off their big and clumsy guns at once, and great billows of smoke blew about the little fight like the reek of Hades. One of the priests went on to his face with a desperate crash.

The two remaining priests fought like cats, and the adventurers now went at them with their rapiers. The priests held their ground, slipping under the straight thrusts of the long swords and hacking in a disconcerting way at the legs of their foemen, as though more anxious to maim than to kill. In this way two of the Europeans were wounded in the legs, though very quickly both priests were down on the pavement and dead.

The Europeans stood for a moment quiet after this, like men recovering grip of themselves. Then the one unwounded man, who seemed to be the leader, turned and spoke to the man with the cut brow, who seemed to be the guide of the party. When this man had spoken a few words, all walked into the temple, or, rather, the three did so. The man with the cut on his head remained outside, sitting and touching his wound with curious fingers, and gazing at the ground in

a dazed way.

Xavier's dream was a little odd and disconnected now. There were times when he was able to follow the three men into the shadows of the temple—could be with them as they searched rooms and passage-ways, and broke open doors in a keen hunt for something which he knew to be infinitely precious, enormously valuable. In some dreams he had been with them when they made their find in the great dusky room that had many doorless cupboards cut in the thick walls. In these dreams he had seen, with the men, the raying glitter of fabulous things piled



"He started to his feet, looking up, and before him stood the man, leaning against the pedestal of the altar."

in the niche cupboards, heaped in an amazing prodigality on the floor, and he had watched the men packing gold ornaments and jewels into big hide wallets that looked like square hand-bags; he knew, too, with them, that each wallet so filled was worth an enormous fortune. But these dreams, and the dreams in which he saw the shadowy return to the sunlight, were inchoate, vague. Real sense of definition did not come until the sunlight was reached.

It was in the sunlight that events became abrupt, dramatic again. It was in the sunlight that the man with the cut on his head was found lying in a distorted heap, as though writhing in pain. But he felt no pain. He was as dead as the priests

with whom he lay.

The dream went swiftly now, as though hurrying to a close. There came the astonished dismay of the three men, then the abrupt deaths of the two other wounded men, their weakening and their sprawling dissolution, the unnerving horror of the remaining adventurer, as he realised that what had been thought slight wounds were death-wounds, since the swords that had

dealt them had been poisoned.

The dream hurried on like a river in spate. The next thing that Xavier saw was the burying of five of the wallets. The vision seemed to have leapt a space, in the way a magic lantern clicks and then presents a new picture. The survivor had recovered his nerve. He had seen that it would be impossible to get away with more than one wallet, and he had determined to hide the remaining wallets in a place where they would not be found, should worshippers come to the temple and find it plundered. Beyond the edge of the clearing, to the right of the temple, all but covered in the tropical mesh of vines, there was a carven animal god set on a thick square pedestal. Under that pedestal the five wallets-the five fortunes contained in those walletswere buried. Xavier saw the act of burying with a clear and vivid perception, saw the luxuriant vines arranged to cover the turned earth.

It was here that the most startling moment of his dream occurred. It was now that the man stood upright and looked at him.

The man stood up and looked, not in his direction, but at him. The deep eyes held his eyes, the quick mind held his mind from out the kingdom of vision. So, with all the ages between, the two exchanged a glance—a deep glance, a significant glance,

a glance full of meaning and of purpose. And, held in that deep look, the dream always ended for him. Xavier woke.

But though he woke, the look even more than the dream remained with him, holding his attention, dragging at his soul. It was the look that called to him down the ages: "Come! Come!" It was the look he had answered when he had come.

And after the dream of his first night at sea, he woke with the deep meaning of that look richer in his heart, and it seemed to him that the look was not now urging him to come, but expecting him, waiting for him.

The liner made a good passage, his work was light, and in the swinging air of voyaging and in the quick sights he saw, his soul seemed to be expanding in a way he had not known for years—or was it centuries?

Was it centuries? As he stood on the fo'c'sle, heard and loved the bumping rush of the hearty seas beneath him, or as he stood watching the curd-white and chinablue of the ship's wake in the moonlight, he did not feel that all this was good, but that all this was as good as ever, that a fine emotion of old was being repeated in splendour

to-day.

The dream deepened the further south he went, and an uncanny sense of knowledge seemed to grow in him. Vigo was like an old friend; in Lisbon's river he was startled at his familiarity with scenes and landmarks Xavier Bermingham could not have seen before. The Canaries filled him with the same sensation, and so did all the Brazilian coast from Pernambuco to Bahia. It was, however, when they made the mighty harbour of Rio that he seemed to reach the very crescendo of this emotion, for the sight of Rio harbour hurt him. He felt like a man coming home.

He deserted at Rio.

He never really knew whether he had meant to desert all along. He had never put it into thought, though, when the act was committed, he had the feeling that, after all, this was only part of his plan. And perhaps it was, in spite of his apparent lack of premeditation, for on landing he had brought all his money, together with a revolver and cartridges a good-humoured engineer had given him. Also he sat on a hill and watched unperturbed the liner go out to sea.

He sat on this hill and was perfectly calm. Although while in the crisply active streets of Rio itself, he had been visited by VISION. 549

sudden gusts of fear of what was to become of him, how he was to exist, what the end of all this madness would be, up on the hill and in the warm and fragrant southern breeze he felt none of these qualms. If he had thought, he may have realised the madness of the whole business from beginning to end. He did not think. He only felt. And he felt that it was all right, that it would be all right. The glow of his dream was in him, carrying him forward. He was serene where he should have trembled. Something bigger than himself seemed to have the ruling of his life, and now he did not care.

When the last plume of the liner's smoke melted out of view, he stood up on his hill. His nostrils lifted and sucked in the odorous air in ecstasy, and he looked long at the sea, as a man looks long at a dear friend when parting. Then he hung a little, turned and walked down the hill with unhesitant steps, going, a baggy, incongruous figure in incongruous clothes, not towards the town, but along an aloc-lined road leading away from the town. The road struck straight into the heart of Brazil. He did not set eyes on the sea again for eleven months.

It was madness, his journey, but he did not think of madness. He went forward light-heartedly to conquer a country bigger than Europe with a handful of silver and a cheap revolver. But he did not know what he was out to conquer, either. He went on calmly, with the rapt look of the dreamer of dreams in his eyes, a steadily impelling force in his heart. He did not hurry—there seemed no need for hurry, only a need to go on. So he went on, striking north by north-east, with an unruffled and leisurely step.

He spent some of his money at his first and second stops. On the third day a lonely priest with some English gave him board and bed throughout a couple of days for the pleasure of talk about the large world the priest had denied himself all liberty to see. The priest talked to him, gave him advice, listened. He was a gentle, delightful companion. He invited Xavier to stay many days, and Xavier was sorry he had to go.

"Iss eet a long travel you mak?" asked

the priest. "Where you travel?"

Xavier looked out to the north-east and wondered where he was travelling, and he answered—

"I go on. I go straight on."

"The Matto Grosso country, si?" said the priest. "Eet iss a wilda land. You mus' tak' care, senhor. The seerpents are in the forests, and the ants. Eef a black ant bit you, eet iss feevar, si." He looked kindly at the clerk. The dream look in Xavier's eyes had touched him. He was a dreamer of big dreams himself. "Iss eet diamonds?" he asked. "On the Matto Grosso Plateau there are diamonds."

Xavier's face was still turned to the north-Was it diamonds? he wondered. east. Diamonds ought to carry a thrill, but he was not thrilled. He said again—

"I go straight on—straight on."

The priest said no more—he was a dreamer of dreams, too-he helped. He gave Xavier clothes more suitable than his own for travelling in that intense climate, a broad hat of soft grass, a light shirt of strong canvas, a pair of leggings for the forests in which were "seerpents," a haversack with food and quinine in the haversack. He also told the clerk many things of value—how to get drink from the sipor d'agua (the watervine) when there was no water about, the forest fruits that could be eaten, and what could not be eaten. Quietly he helped Xavier without asking for recompense. He dreamed large dreams himself—he understood.

Xavier went on. He went on for months. Sometimes he worked, sometimes he ate and slept in hospitable huts, sometimes he slept out on the plains or on a forest track. Once he shipped on a dug-out barge and helped to sail her on a big river that seemed to run for miles, only to desert quite abruptly at a little town the name of which he had never heard, the name of which, indeed, he never knew. He went on walking again, sometimes living desperately, sometimes living comfortably, but going on, always

going on.

He had gone beyond any reaction now, or any sense of fear. He went into wild places, where tracks ran through the morning-black gloom of forests, where the forests themselves were creeping with malignant beasts he could hear, and the more malignant beasts it was impossible to hear. He went through these forests steadily, almost miraculously. The forests were death-traps to expert woodmen sometimes, labyrinths whose swift, green growth they never really knew from month to month. Yet Xavier never went astray, he was never lost in the labyrinth. The glamour of the dream that called him also guided him. He went onward, doing things

that most experienced men could not do and live. His clothes went to rags, and he was given other clothes. His hat—many hats—were thrashed to ribbons by vines. Men looked into his gentle, dreamy eyes and gave him fresh hats. He expended all his cart-ridges on game; a large-sized Englishman filled his pouch again as thankoffering for a day's talk about Camberwell. He got a big vine-cutting tassado from somewhere, he

never quite knew where.

His dream was with him every night now, more vivid, more rich, more real. He could see it and understand it better. The trees of the forest were the trees of his dream; the flowers, the meshing vines, the perfect sky, the callous sunlight of Brazil, were in and of his dream. He was in the country of his vision. He was marching through the country of his vision to the place of his vision. He no longer questioned his dream; he merely felt the pull of it and obeyed. In the middle of the fifth month he came upon an Englishman and upon something that seemed to him a message. Englishman was there to extract immediate rubber dividends out of an estate that had only just been planted. He was hospitable, as most Englishmen in foreign lands are, but his solitude had made him curious. "Why and where?" he had demanded, when Xavier had said he was going on, just going straight on. Xavier shrugged his shoulders and said it again.

"You won't mind my asking if you're mad?" said the Englishman politely. "This estate is the last of the cultivated belt—if chopping down weeds can be called cultivation. Beyond this runs the rank forest, that has been untouched since three days before Adam—virgin forest, or practically virgin. I'm the last white man on earth. You'll find a few Indians, rubber-gatherers, orchid-men, and the like, in the next thousand miles, and nothing else but trees and vines. There may be forest tracks, but if you find them, you can work miracles. It's practically all impenetrable bush—and yet you are going on."

Xavier smiled, but did not argue.

"What's the game?" demanded the Englishman. "Treasure?"

Xavier stopped smiling. He looked at

the Englishman and feared.

"Treasure?" he asked. "Why treasure?" He pulled his wits together. "Do I look like treasure, then?"

"Not much," grinned the Englishman, and Xavier knew he was safe. "But the

air about here is sizzling with treasure talk. Perhaps the whole of Brazil is, too, for all I know. There is always an enormous fortune in jewels lying somewhere where no one can find it."

"What is the treasure talk here?" asked Xavier, and he smiled, for he felt he knew

what was coming.

"Oh, I dare say it's usual enough." The planter stared north-east. "Somewhere hidden deep in that infernal mass of trees there is supposed to be an old shrine, an old temple. It's supposed to be absolutely packed with jewels."

"So," smiled Xavier.

"That's the tale," continued the Englishman. "There's the usual yarn, too, of its being discovered so many hundred years ago — like Golconda — by Spanish pioneers. When the Spaniards touched the jewels, so the legend runs, the gods of the place rose up and smote them dead. The gods of the place always smite 'em dead in this sort of story, eh? Saves such a lot of further explanation."

"It's quite interesting," said Xavier. And next morning he went on again, wearing a pair of the Englishman's cord breeches, and carrying fifty of the Englishman's revolver cartridges and a lot of quinine in a stout new haversack the Englishman had given

him.

"Pay me back with a diamond or two when you hit your treasure," the planter laughed. And Xavier laughed, too, softly, quietly, for he had dreamed his dream that night, and it had never been so rich, so

precise and vivid in its detail.

But that was the last time he dreamed for three weeks. The three weeks were terrible. The forest, indeed, was virgin, and meshed like a nightmare. Xavier cut his way slowly—a yard an hour with infinite toil—through the felted mesh of vines. Once he got bogged, went up to his armpits in age-old slime before he knew what had happened. In that deep and humid darkness under the trees no sun could penetrate to dry his clothes, so for a day Xavier wore them wet. That night he had fever, and for many days that followed he had fever, and lay in a clearing, swallowing quinine and wondering exactly when he would die.

He did not die, but rose like a ghost and went on. The forest barred his way like a sentient thing. He fought the forest. Not by yards now, but by feet he hacked his forward way, and even that small progress was the fruit of agony. When he came to

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open glades, he followed these slowly, savouring the exquisite sense of moving without
excessive toil. But there were not many
glades. He found one track only, almost
closed with vines, but still a track, and he
followed that for half a day. That was all
his relief. He met no human being at

all, nor sign of human beings.

The awful toil was nothing, nothing at all. It was the absence of the dream that dismayed him most. Its going left him without support. He felt trivial, feeble, hopeless. For the first time since he had shipped from Southampton real terror engulfed him. He saw the futility of his travelling, the absurdity of his taking vision for reality; he saw the hopelessness of his quest, foresaw the tragic end of it. Standing, a tiny, an absurd figure, in the midst of all these ruthless forces of Nature, he felt that his questing could end only one way. He saw mammothine trunks, fallen and phosphorescent in death. Nature had killed those giants. How easily Nature would slay so small a thing as himself! Fever was in his bones. He was weak with despair. If only the dream would come to him! But it did not.

So, in the end, fever and despair beat him. He had come out into the sunlit blaze of a little clearing that seemed to be still fighting the invading rush of the forest that had already half conquered it. As he stood in the bitter sun of the clearing, a final derpair came to Xavier. He felt that he and the clearing were alike—they were fighting a force too enormous for their strength. Across the clearing the wall of trees barred his way, implacably green, and, as he saw them, something broke within him, and he knew that he had reached his limit—that, whatever happened, he was not going on. He stood there looking at his enemies, the trees and the vines, and all desire to continue, all will to go forward, drained out of him. And then he fell down. With the snapping of will, the fever burst in on him, and he lay in the sun, writhing, muttering, delirious.

It was then, like a mocking chimera, his

dream came to him again.

He did not know if his eyes were shut in sleep or open, but it did not matter. He saw it all well, all vividly, and with a greater sense of definition than he had ever seen it before. (That must be the fever, he thought, for a queer, bright thread of consciousness ran through the fabric of his delirium.) Before, the figures, the temple, the events, had never been aught but dream things.

Now he thought they had bulk, had substance, had real life.

Dreams are mad things. This dream was madder than all dreams. It had changed the little clearing, that had inflicted him with despair, into the clearing of his dreams. The all-conquering trees had gone back, and, in the larger area exposed, the temple of his dream shone brown-white against the verdure as it had always shone.

And the men moved and fought before the temple as they always fought, but now he thought that, if he rose up and went to them, he would find them solid, find them human flesh and blood. It was real, real! The hacking of the swords, the wounds, the slithering fall of the dead, was horribly real.

The three men went into the temple, remained a space, and came out. He saw their horror as they stood over the dead guide, the horrible death of the poisoned twain. He saw the grim accent of utter loneliness etched on the single living figure—he saw the burying of the five wallets.

But it was very real. Xavier seemed to take part in the burial. He saw the wet, black loam of the forest turned up; he even felt the loam, wet and clinging and smelling of rot, on his hands as he flung it aside with his big tassado. The vines seemed to impede the digging, and he brushed them away. It was real, it was extraordinary.

Somehow, the man who ought to be digging, the survivor, had stood aside, and it was himself who did all the digging. That must be the fever, too, Xavier thought,

but he went on digging.

Then the most startling thing of this extraordinary dream happened. Instead of digging a hole deep enough to take the wallets, he came upon the wallets. He plunged his fingers through the damp, loose, leafy mould, and his hand came upon something hard. He lifted it, looked at it. It was a buckle, a buckle of an odd, unfamiliar yet familiar shape, but a buckle, all the same. Xavier was startled. He plunged his hands downward again, sweeping away the mould. From out the excavation there leaped at him a thousand raying points of light. The bottom of the excavation was a mass of jewels.

Xavier gazed at them in astonishment. He saw them all tumbled there, free of the wallets that the years had rotted to nothing, glittering, wonderful, each gem enormously valuable. And, as he gazed, it seemed to him that his fever had left him, that he was

clear-eyed, sane, unless he was mad

He started to his feet, looking up, and before him stood the man, leaning against the pedestal of the altar, gazing at him as he had always gazed, bending on him that pregnant, meaning look down all the ages. For a moment they hung so, then, even as Xavier looked, things changed. The pedestal crumbled, became a jumbled heap of ruined stone, and what Xavier had thought to be the man was not a man. It was a shadow—his own shadow flung across the ruined altar and the vines that clung about it.

And then, as Xavier, completely well, completely free from fever, turned about, he saw through an opening in the trees the little clearing, the little half-conquered clearing, and nothing else. It was there, bright with sunlight, as it was when he had faltered and fallen in it just now, and his own haversack was lying bright in the sunlight. He must have risen to his feet and come here this short way through the trees in his delirium.

He turned again, saw the crumbled stone of the altar, saw his shadow on it, and, looking down, he saw the jewels. He bent down and touched them with his hands. Yes, they were real—they were not dream things, they were real jewels.

He began to fill his pockets with them, to

load the bosom of his loose shirt.

At last he was realising, was understanding the meaning of his dream.



### A SONG OF AUTUMN.

WAS it only a year ago to-day
That you and I were happy, dear, together?
Not dreaming then how soon you'd haste away
And leave me lonely in the Autumn weather.

Not any more shall you and I go roaming
Along the hills we loved, in wind and rain,
Stand in the storm to watch the wild birds homing,
Planning the future with no thought of pain.

Not any more shall you and I together
Wander along the sea-shore side by side,
Hearing the seagulls cry in stormy weather,
Yet knowing not the message that they cried.

Not any more shall we, in bright June weather, List to the streamlet running o'er its weirs, As on that day when we two stood together, Not hearing in its music our own tears.

Not any more shall we, in August weather, Kiss the last kiss before I go alone To tread the path which we two planned together— My heart lies buried 'neath a nameless stone.

PAMELA HINKSON.

# THE HEART'S AWAKENIG

# By H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

Illustrated by H. R. Millar

I. PLUNDER FROM THE SEA.



WANING moon, vast and vague, hung above the icy blue of dawn, and all down the coast the sea, beating upon the rocks, sang to the land a thriddy song, desolate as the wind that blew

from the distant mountains.

The mountains lay to the east, the sea to the west, to the north lay mountains, and to the south a vast plain bordered by the sea and reaching to the eastern foothills; and north, and east, and almost to the sea-edge in the south, the forms and fumes of volcanoes stamped and stained the sky.

Some inhabitant of Mars, had he suddenly been placed here, would have stood fascinated and held by two things-the enormity of that awful moon, so huge, so ghostly, yet so vividly real and, despite its vagueness, so evidently a solid body and not a cloud, and the activity of those volcanic hills in the midst of the absolute and utter desolation. Then, had he stood long enough and scanned the scene attentively, other things stranger than the moon, or the silence, or the furiously active hills, might have drawn his attention. Those great rocks by the sea border in the middle distance, could it possibly be that they were in motion? That flight of giant birds, breaking the sky now above the hills, was that an illusion?

Then, had he carried here with him from Mars a human intelligence, he would without doubt have forgotten all

else in contemplation of the man and woman coming up from the sea-edge and making eastward along the flat lands in the direction of the distant mountains. The woman was walking first, laden with a bundle of sea refuse collected beneath the light of that vanishing moon—a light that had been brilliant almost as the light of day. She was carrying the bundle by a thong of hide on which the fur still remained, and from amongst the fucus and sea-wrack the claw of an enormous crab hung loose.

The man following the woman carried nothing but a club, black as ebony, made from some heavy wood and charred into shape by fire. They wore no semblance of clothing, and the man, as he walked swinging the club, gazed about wildly and vaguely, sweeping all the landscape near and far, to right, to left, in front, and now and again,

glancing back, behind.

His gaze from time to time, losing its vagueness, concentrated on some point, and then became piercing and hard as a dagger. He seemed the incarnation of watchfulness—tireless, mechanical, eternal watchfulness. The woman looked neither to right nor left. She carried the load.

Her legs were marked by old scars, as were her sides and arms. The man was terrible with old wounds long cicatrised, and his face were scars that were features.

They seemed to have travelled all their lives through some great bramble that had clutched and torn at them without being able to stay them or kill them. Their appearance, far from being pitiable, was terrific, emblematic of the truth that Man, though Nature has denied him fangs and claws, has always been the most potent and terrible animal in the world, and ever will be.

II. THE VALLEY OF THE LITTLE HORSES.

As the sun broke above the eastern hills, and the level beams struck across from the hill shadows to the blue blaze of the sea, the air became filled with a dolorous piping and droning. Millions of squat-shaped lizards and flying and crawling insects were giving tongue, and from the rock shadows round about creatures like plucked chickens, with huge membranous wings, fluttered up and fleeted away on the air to right and left before the advance of the human beings.

The man noted everything, missed nothing of what was happening within reach of his eyes and ears and skin, for his skin, though absolutely indifferent to changes of temperature, told him with unfailing sureness of the approach of those awful thunderstorms that shook the world to its foundations, and of the earth storms that now and then made the hills heave and tumble to the light of new blazing volcanoes, the great bogs to break their beds, and the geysers to roar and thump and boom.

And just as his senses told him all things without language, so his mind accepted all things without question, and saw all things as they are. No thing had for him a name, not even the woman tramping before him.

Speech was only a means of communication, a method of expressing sudden anger or dislike, rebuke or encouragement.

Now, as the man tramped behind his mate, he would call out occasionally, if she slowed her pace or paused for any reason, "Hike-Hike-Hike!" a sound monotonous and hard as the clapping of a rattle. The voices of the pterodactyls clacking in the distance were no less human, and the voice of the far-off sea scarcely less articulate.

They were making across the boulderstrewn plain towards a spot where every now and then a white plume rose into the air, wavered, and vanished.

It was a geyser, and, as they neared it, its voice came to them on the wind; and as they passed it, the water spouted and sputtered, booming up, snarling, snorting, and spraying them as they went by, absolutely heedless of it.

Beyond the geyser the ground dipped into a vast basin, a valley where rank grass grew and great boulders stood about like stone figures, and little forms moved here and there singly and in groups.

They were horses—tiny horses of a height scarcely reaching the height of the man's knee, wandering about like moving toys,

cropping the grass, and scattering now at the sight of the new-comers with shrill cries and a sound like the beating of little drums.

In a moment not a horse was to be seen, and the man and woman were the only moving things in all that vast valley, with the exception of the lizards that haunted the rock shadows—enormous dun-grey lizards, a dying tribe, sluggish and so given over to inertia that they scarcely moved from the path of the human beings, lying like creatures in a great infirmary, patients given over by Nature and doomed to die.

They were the last patterns of an extinct age, a fashion in form that Nature was discarding.

The great pterodactyls sometimes made raids here when food was scarce elsewhere, but the great pterodactyls, for some mysterious reason, dreaded the little horses, and the dying tribe was left in comparative peace.

The rock shadows were now shortening, and they had almost vanished when the man and woman reached the rising ground that marked the end of the valley and the beginning of a country hard and fierce and fantastic with the fantasy of basalt. Giants seemed to have fought here with rocks, and left behind them the silence that held the place, which, seen from a distance, had the appearance of a broken plain. But it was not that. To cross it, you had to follow gullies that sank hundreds of feet between walls of basaltic rock, cañons that seemed valleys in a hilly country.

# III. THE HOME OF THE DYING PTERODACTYLS.

THEY were nearly through the place when they came upon a horror.

Where the canon they were following broadened out to begin the ascent to higher and less dismal ground, a croaking sound filled the air, and was amplified by the cliff echoes; and now, amongst the rocks and perched on the rocks, might be seen vast forms, like the forms of birds that had lost their feathers, birds with huge, membranous, half-folded wings, birds with the heads of demons, spectres that had once flown, but would never fly again.

They were the sick and old of the great pterodactyls. This was their hospital and last home. No longer able to hunt and seek their food, they came here to die, and, being things almost indestructible, they did not die quickly.

In a more hungry land they would have been sought out, even in this last retreat, and devoured by all sorts of creatures; but in this world food was plentiful for all who could pursue and strike, or even move about to graze under the protection of armourplating, and these bloodless things were left in peace. Besides, though capable of being easily attacked by their own kind, they were still capable of evading the attentions of footed creatures by fluttering to the rock shelves and the higher rocks.

The wayfarers, steadily pursuing their path, took no notice of these familiar ghosts or the ghastly and faded odour of the air around them, but pushed on to the higher ground, where they paused for the first time in their journey, whilst the woman, putting down her bundle, produced some raw fish for the

mid-day meal.

It was now slightly after noon, and from this high point of ground the country lay spread before the eye far and wide—a terrific desolation lit by the sun for the blowing wind that seemed its only denizen.

As they fed, the woman sat with eyes fixed before her, chewing as a cow chews the cud. Thought with her was a half-brother of sleep, her life a gigantic labour in a dream.

The man as he ate stood erect and watchful. He had no need for rest; he never rested, except when he slept, stretched out in the cave that was their hiding-place and home.

The cave was still far away.

Once every season, when the new grass was showing, they left it, drawn by some irresistible instinct to the sea. The sea began to talk to them and call to them with a voice that was not to be resisted. All over the land this migration of cave-dwellers to the sea took place at the same season, and the eternal warfare and feuds between man and man ceased.

Life by the sea-edge was safe from human attack—the migrants seemed under a common pledge to observe peace—but here it was different, with the sea out of sight and in a country that seemed constructed with a view to ambush.

# IV. THE ATTACK.

It was long after noon, amongst a country broken and boulder-strewn, that the ever-expected happened. Something whistled past the man's head, and a disc-shaped stone smashed itself to pieces against a mass of basalt, and from the rocks around three

forms appeared, shouted one to the other, and then came on the wayfarers with a rush.

They were armed with great stones, and the man with the club, attacked by two adversaries, and knowing that they would only strike with the stones when at close quarters, ran, taking a half-circle round a rock and instantly doubling back again. He met his first pursuer full face, and dashed his chin up with the end of the club before the stone could be raised for attack. Leaving the corpse, he faced like lightning towards the second attacker, who had drawn off, and was now rushing in with stone upraised. It flew, was evaded, and now the stone-thrower, running and screaming, was the man attacked.

The club man held on his heels, doubling as he doubled, twisting as he twisted, and now, as the pursued took a straight line, gaining on him as a greyhound on a hare. A watcher would have seen the club rising as the striking distance was slowly gained, and then falling, lethal and swift, and so perfectly aimed that the head of the stricken man flew outward from the crown, and he fell as if cut off at the knees.

Without a second glance at him, the club man wheeled and came running to where the woman and the third attacker lay fighting and struggling on the ground. This man had got the blow of the stone in, catching the woman on the side, but without entirely disabling her. The great crab and the bundle of sea refuse was the prize that had drawn the plunderers, and they were the objects for which now the woman was risking her life—she who could have obtained safety at the outset by dropping her load.

The man with the club drew near the

The man with the club drew near the strugglers at a swift run, half bending, trailing the club behind him and crouching, like a cat prepared to spring, when he

reached them.

The bundle was lying loose on the ground, and the struggling forms were so interlocked together that to strike might have been death to the woman. She had her teeth fixed firmly in the shoulder of her assailant, her left arm was round his body, and her right hand fixed in his hair. As they rolled over and over, biting and fighting like mad cats, the right hand of the man suddenly shot out, grabbing along the ground as if in search of the weapon it could use so well—a stone. The man with the club instantly saw his chance, and brought the club down with an awful blow on the hand.

Just as the octopus drops from its prey when the brain is pierced, so did the man on the ground when his hand was shattered. He fell away from the woman, she sprang to her feet, and the man with the club struck home. He struck solemnly and hard, like a workman completing a good job; then he rearranged the bundle, from which the precious crab had nearly broken loose, and the woman standing by let him fasten it upon her.

It had been a great fight, yet there was no jubilation shown by the victors; the



"He saw the light now fading out of her eyes.

three dead men might have been three rocks that they had succeeded in climbing over, for all the attention they paid to them. The crab was everything, and the bundle of sea refuse. There was two days' food in the crab, and the refuse was mostly edible seaweed. The migrants to the sea always returned laden with whatever sea-food they could find to bring back, and this fact was known to the few men who did not migrate, preferring to remain in the solitudes, hearing no call from the sea, but always ready to

plunder the returning travellers of their fish and crabs.

They never attacked unless in superior numbers. These three had fancied that a man and a woman would be fair game for them, and they lay now amidst the rocks, never to fancy anything more, whilst the man and the woman passed on.

They could see now the low range of hills beyond which lay their home; but the range was a good way off still, and between them and it lay a bog that was bad to pass—a

lake of mud through which a ridge of firm land ran, making a road. They reached this place and began to cross, walking warily, whilst the woman, for the first time on the journey, looked incessantly to right and to left of her, as though dreading some trap or antagonist.

They had nearly reached the opposite bank, when the mud on their right suddenly heaved and broke, and a vague head, that seemed roughly compounded of mud broke up, rose on a long ringed neck and shot towards them. It was met by a blow of the club and collapsed, sinking back into the mud, which closed on it.

### V. THE LAST HALT.

It was nearly sundown when they reached the crest of the hills, and here the woman stopped. She let the bundle slip from her back, and then, just as though all life were going out of her, she fell together and sank to the ground. The man, uncomprehending, stood and looked

at her. The blow of the great stone had inflicted a mortal injury, affecting the heart and lungs, yet she had carried her load and walked forward to the last. It was impossible any longer to stand, impossible to lie on her left side. She lay supporting herself on her right arm, breathing hard and looking up at the man.

From the hill-top, away beyond the broken plain, could be seen the sea, nearly touched by the setting sun, to the east the volcanic mountains, all mauve and purple

and grey, and between the mountains and the sea-line no living thing or sign of life, with the exception of the two forms upon the hill-crest.

The woman's eyes were still fixed on the man, filled with a wild perplexity, and her breathing, heavy and laboured, was that of

a creature drawing to its last gasp.

The man squatted down beside her, knowing nothing of the extent of her injury, knowing nothing of that last desperate effort that enabled her to climb to the top of the last barrier dividing them from their home. He saw the light now fading out of her eyes. He placed his hand upon her chest. He felt her body arch upwards, stiffen, and collapse. Then he knew that she was dead.

She would never walk again, or move, or help him or be with him.

He knew little of pain, and he had never known sorrow. His memory was so vague that in his mind the woman had always been with him.

And now she would never be with him

again.

He looked at her, and then looked away to the great setting sun and the blazing western sea. Then, as if stricken by the desolation that lay before him, he raised his face to the blind skies above, calling to them in a lamentable voice, waking the echoes of the hills to repeat what they had never heard before.



# CHRISTMAS, 1915.

FEAST of the Christ-Child's birth,
Divinely sweet, can Earth
Greet thee from out the strife,
Bloodshed, and din of life
To-day?

Peace was the message clear For all mankind to hear: Love and good-will to all. Strangely those echoes fall To-day.

Yet hath the human race
Need of the Christ-Child's grace.
Hunger and thirst for love,
War's rage and hate above,
To-day.

EDITH DART.

# A SINGLE HAIR

# By FRED M. WHITE

Illustrated by Charles Crombie



LFRED BARNES,
eke of London
University, M.D.,
looked despairingly
out to sea. He
was seated on the
edge of a rotten
verandah of a
tumble-down
bungalow on the
margin of the Coral

Sea down there, in the South Pacific, on the outer fringe of civilisation. In front of him was a stretch of white sand, with the whiter surf beyond, creamy and mantling in the sunshine, and behind him the swaying plumes of the palms, or, at least, they would have been the swaying plumes of the palms but for the fact that the little islet of Omolo lay in the centre of the anti-cyclone, and not a breath of air came to Barnes's almost atrophied lungs. He could feel the perspiration trickling down his forehead as he sat there cursing his fate and the imps of chance that had brought him all the way from London and Janet Blyth.

It was not his fault entirely. He had put his little capital into a practice largely built on bogus ledgers and apocryphal patients, so that, at the end of a year, instead of a comfortable living, with Janet by his side, he had found himself on the verge of

bankruptcy.

When everything was disposed of, he found himself facing the world with a five-pound note, and looking a black future squarely into its forbidding eyes. Then, in a fit of despair, he had sold himself to Mark Gride, the eminent pathologist, for three thousand pounds. With the money went Barnes into practically three years' penal servitude, though he had not grasped it at the time. He had talked the matter over with Janet, and it had seemed to her that the opening was a good one. It meant, of course, three years' separation, with fifteen thousand miles of sea

between them; but then Wilfred would be able to save every penny of the money, and, when he came back, be in a position to buy another practice more promising than the first one. And so Barnes had set his teeth grimly and come all that way to a little island on the edge of the Solomon Group, with the firm determination to make the best of things; and here he was, at the end of the first year, cursing his bonds and wishing, from the bottom of his heart, that Fate had never brought him in contact with the cold-blooded brute and unfeeling savage who was known to men as Mark Gride. Far better had he stayed in England and accepted a job as locum to some sixpenny doctor in the East End of London. And he had known something of Gride's reputation, too. The man in question had had a brilliant career at Cambridge and University College, where he had towered over his fellows like the intellectual giant that he undoubtedly was. But then he was ill-disciplined, intolerant, and brutal in his manner, and so callous in his methods as to bring him, in the course of time, before the Council of the College of Surgeons. There had been a pretty big scandal over some vivisection atrocities, and it was only Gride's amazing record that had saved him from professional disgrace. Fortunately for him, he was the possessor of ample private means, a mad enthusiast as far as his profession was concerned, a daring experimentalist and pioneer, and so it came about that he shook the dust of London from his feet and migrated to a region where he would be able to pursue his investigations in an atmosphere of greater freedom and less responsibility. And when he had offered the post of assistant to Barnes, the latter had jumped at the offer immediately.

The conditions were pretty stringent, too, though the pay was good enough. Barnes was to have three thousand pounds for three years' services, the money to be paid in one sum at the termination of the contract. If

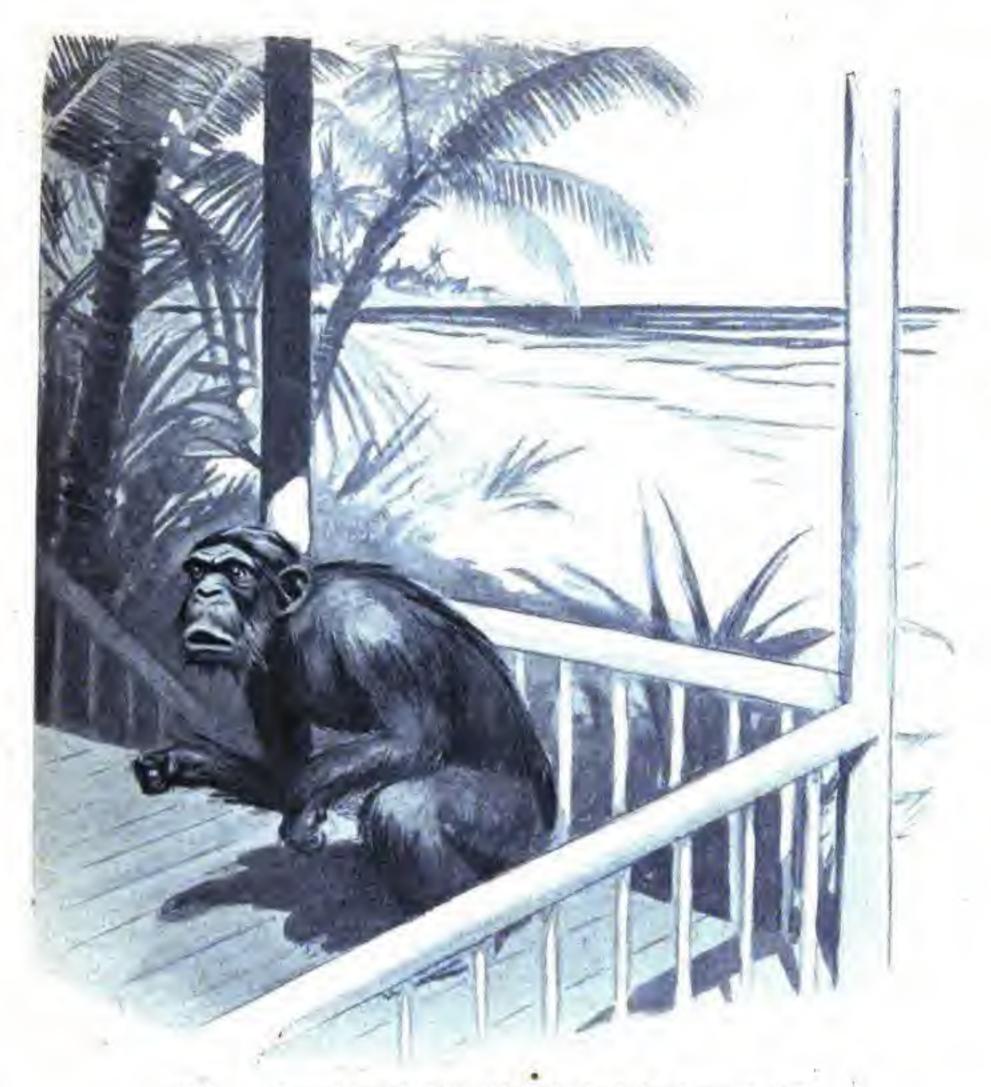


"'Look at Crim! Take care of yourself!"

in the meantime Barnes decided to cancel the agreement, then he was to get nothing except his passage home. And if in the meantime anything happened to Gride, then the whole of the money was to be payable at once through the latter's solicitors in London, who had the necessary authority to deal with the case.

And then there followed for Barnes a year of hideous nightmare that racked his soul and filled him with the lust for slaughter a dozen times a day. For out there, in Omolo, Gride could do as he liked. He had his menagerie of beasts and reptiles, monkeys and the like, upon which he experimented with a cold-blooded malignity that amounted almost to mania. Indeed, in a fashion, the man was mad. He had no fear of the College of Surgeons before his eyes out there, and he seemed to revel in a refined cruelty which might possibly have been accounted for by the fact that between his spells of scientific research he had heavy bouts of drinking that brought him frequently to the verge of delirium tremens.

The year was passing in a review before



"He . . . advanced towards Gride with hands clenched and eyes aflame."

Barnes's eyes as he sat there, wondering if it was a little wider than that of the Englishwas possible for flesh and blood to stand it any longer. A score of times he had made up his mind to quit the whole thing and return home without being a penny the better for all he had done. And then the vision of Janet would rise before his eyes, and he would grip his teeth and string himself to go on to the bitter end. Even then he probably might not have done so, had it not been for Denton.

This Denton was a cheery American naturalist attached to Columbia University, who was out there, in Omolo, studying the local butterflies. Perhaps he hated Gride as much as did Barnes, but his philosophy

man; and, besides, the American was not called upon to take any part in those mumbojumbo rights and sacrifices of blood that Gride's seared and blackened soul revelled in. Still, he was a tonic to Barnes, and a sympathetic companion who kept him going from day to day.

He came on to the balcony now with a glorious purple-and-gold butterfly on the palm of his hand. It was a new and rare specimen, and his shrewd grey eyes twinkled

as he contemplated it.

"Well, how are we getting on?" he asked cheerfully. "How's old Moloch this morning?"

"Infernally bad," Barnes said moodily. "He hasn't been sober for the last three days, though signs are not wanting that he is. coming round. I've had a ghastly week, old chap—perfectly ghastly—an orgy of blood and cruelty that has made my very soul retch. And not a pennyworth of anæsthetic on the island, except the morphia that Gride - and scolded in Gride's direction. As a rule, uses to soothe his nerves after one of his outbreaks. I wouldn't mind if there were, but when I see those poor brutes—I tell you, Denton, I'm an infernal scoundrel to go on with it! And yet what can I do? I have sold myself for a price, and, Heaven knows, I am earning every penny of the money!"

As Barnes spoke, Denton jerked his thumb significantly over his shoulder, and a moment later Gride appeared. He was shivering from head to foot in spite of the heat, his strong, intellectual face was green and ghastly, his chin was dingy with a five days' beard. And yet, though he was racked and broken by the brandy he had been drinking, the man's mind was clear and vigorous enough, and his great, strong will was

dominating his tortured body.

"You were talking about me," he said suspiciously. "Oh, I can guess what Barnes has been saying. Let him grumble as much as he likes, I've got him all right. He is a sort of Jacob serving for Rachel. Ha! Ha! Go in the house and mix me a 30 injection of morphia. We are going to be busy to-night, Barnes. You had better clear out, Denton, and don't come here again till I send for you."

"It's a cordial invitation," Denton drawled, "and I shall have much pleasure in availing

myself of it."

The American sauntered off with the butterfly in his hand, and the ghastly wreck with a five days' beard turned angrily upon his unhappy assistant.

"You just drop that," he said. "I'm sick of your whining. You are my servant."

"Your slave," Barnes said bitterly.

"Well, perhaps that's a better word. My slave for the next two years to come, and don't you forget it. Not that I am complaining about the way you do your work. Why, good Heavens, man, there are scores of young doctors who would give their heads for a chance like yours! Look what I've taught you! Look what you will be able to teach the snivelling sentimentalists in England when you get back! And yet you whine and whimper because I put a knife into a strapped monkey, without an anæsthetic, as if he were a human being. Look at Crim,

yonder! Is he any the worse for what he has gone through?"

As Gride spoke, he pointed a trembling forefinger to a chimpanzee perched on the edge of the balcony. The monkey seemed to know by some instinct that he was under discussion, for he chattered and gibbered Crim was mild-mannered enough, and for Barnes the intelligent beast had quite an affection. But Gride he hated at the bottom of his simian soul. He had known what it was to come under the Professor's knife, and even at that moment, as he turned, Barnes could see the recent stitches in a comparatively new wound between the ape's shoulders.

"I wouldn't drive Crim too far, if I were you," he said. "Some of these days he'll do you a mischief. And he's powerful enough to do so, despite his gentleness."

Gride laughed harshly.

"I've flayed him a score of times," he said. "He'll never do any mischief—he hasn't got pluck enough. And I am not going seriously to hurt the best subject I've got. Now go and get me that morphia, and I'll show you something presently that no pathologist has ever dreamt of before. I'm going to show you a new serum; I am going to show you an absolute certain cure for cancer. You know what I've been doing with that little banana monkey Mini. She's full of it. I'm going to cut her throat —it's the only way of doing it—and then you will be part-discoverer of the greatest healing power in the world. And yet people whine and snivel over vivisection, and pretend that the whole of humanity had better suffer than some furry little beast should be tortured. Then I'll have a shave and a bath, and we'll open a case of champagne for dinner. Now, get a move

Barnes came out presently with a hypodermic syringe, and injected the morphia into the arm of his chief. In less than a minute Gride was a new man. The green tinge left his cheek, the haggard look faded from his eyes, he paced up and down the verandah with the air of a man to whom the secrets of continents are revealed. Then he went into his own operating-room, and came back presently with a tiny monkey in a cage. He had under his arm a small leather dressingcase containing a set of razors and the necessary implements of shaving. Then, without a word, he took the tiny simian from its cage and laid it face upwards on his

knees. With a hand as steady as a rock, he drew the edge of the shining blade across the monkey's throat. There was just a little gasping cry, with a creepy suggestion of humanity in it, and the tiny creature lay dead.

"Behold, you see there is practically no flow of blood," Gride said, in the tones of a man who is demonstrating some everyday problem. "Not more than a tablespoonful altogether. But the precious serum is there on the fur, and we can easily cultivate from that. Simple, isn't it?"

"Horrible, ghastly!" Barnes shuddered. "But look at Crim! Take care of yourself!"

All this time the chimpanzee had been watching the proceedings with an intelligence almost weirdly human. He hopped down from his perch and advanced towards Gride with hands clenched and eyes aflame with anger. Then his mood seemed to change, for he stooped and picked up the razor and ran his paw along the edge much as a man might have done who is in the act of shaving. He dropped the weapon again, and, with a quick, strangled cry, disappeared in the hanging foliage of a palm. Something seemed to grip Barnes by the throat.

He stood there, holding himself in hard and sweating from head to foot with the nausea and horror of it. Not that it was anything fresh, but there were moments of high nervous tension, one little episode piled upon another, till it seemed to him that he could stand it no longer. He saw Gride stoop, and with a surgical knife cut the little blood-stained patch of hair from the dead monkey's throat, and place it carefully in a tin specimen case, which he dropped into the pocket of his filthy dirty linen jacket, together with the razor with which the thing had been done.

To Gride it was nothing, merely a trivial incident in the day's work. He lay back in the big basket-chair and half closed his eyes, for the morphia had him in its grip now, and the man was worn fine by the need of sleep. He could see nothing of the contempt and anger in Barnes's eyes. And yet, had Gride been possessed of one touch of humanity, one shred of human feeling, then a greater man he might have been. As it was, he was a kind of scientific Bismarck, with all that individual's brutal contempt for anything or anybody that came between him and the goal of his desire. He had all the massive intellectuality, too, with the spiteful cruelty of a Marat, a highly organised machine with as much sensibility and feeling.

He closed his eyes, and muttered something to the effect that he needed sleep, and that on no account was he to be disturbed.

"All right," Barnes said. "And if you die in your sleep, I shall thank God for it."

"Yes, it would be a good get out for you," Gride chuckled. "In the meantime, go on with your dinner, and don't worry about me. And tell Cosmos I want him."

The middle-aged Kanaka boy who cooked and cleaned and did for the two Englishmen emerged from his black hole at the back of the bungalow and stood to attention.

"I am going to sleep for an hour, Cosmos," Gride said. "Don't disturb me anyhow. Bring out my shaving glass and the soap and some warm water, and put it on the table there, so that I can shave when I wake."

The Kanaka complied obediently. He placed the tackle by the side of his master. He stropped the razor and laid it on the table convenient to Gride's hand. The latter might wake up in an hour, or he might sleep there all night, as he frequently did after one of his drinking bouts. For the moment he was worn out, body and soul. When the fiery spirit reached him, he would drink for two or three days at a time, eating nothing and working night and day, forced on by driving pressure that he could not resist. In these abnormal conditions his brain was at its best and brightest. Then Nature would call a halt, and after a dose of the blessed nepenthe he would

frequently sleep the clock round.

And these were times that Barnes looked forward to, hours that he had entirely to himself to think and dream and plan for the future. He was turning matters over in his mind now as he pushed his chair back from the dining-room table and lit his pipe. How much longer could he go on like this? he wondered. Would it be possible to continue to the end of his servitude? Or should he throw up the whole thing and go back to Janet, and tell her that he had failed? An hour or so passed; the great full tropical moon crept up over the edge of the lagoon and flooded the sweating palm beach with a light as bright as day. There was silence everywhere, and not a sound to break it save the murmur of the tide on the sand and the hum of insects in the air. Then presently Cosmos, in the black hole that he called his kitchen, began to sing some weird Kanaka song, and Barnes was glad, for there was something near and companionable even in the nigger's voice. Then his own storm

of black thoughts began to drift away, and he stepped out through the open window into the flooded glory of the perfect night. How far away from strife and trouble it all

seemed, how peaceful and attractive !

Gride still lay there, with his long legs outstretched and his big, massive head thrown back against the cushions of his chair. He was in for a night's sleep, evidently. Probably he would not wake again till far into the next day. He was as still and rigid as the fringe of palms behind the golden beach—almost ominously still, Barnes thought. Some night he would die like this, for the man had an aneurism of the heart, and he had always declared that, if the trouble gripped him at the same time as he was in the midst of one of his drinking bouts, he would go out like the snuff of a candle. Almost in a spirit of hopefulness—an emotion of which he was slightly ashamed—Barnes approached the man who held him in bondage. Then he staggered back with a choking cry in his throat.

It was practically daylight, and every little detail stood out clear-cut as a cameo. Gride lay there. Barnes could see his head thrown back, and his throat cut from ear to ear. The keen blade had swept through the carotid artery and had penetrated almost to the spinal column. The dingy linen jacket and the discoloured shirt were stained with blood, already beginning to congeal, and from this Barnes judged that his brutal taskmaster had been dead an hour or two. A few yards away, on the edge of the verandah, lay a bloodstained razor, as if it had been hurriedly thrown down there by the assassin in his flight. But for this evidence, Barnes might have concluded that Gride had taken his own life; but no man could have inflicted such a mortal injury upon himself and at the same time flung the lethal weapon so far away. No, beyonda doubt, Gride had been murdered, and Barnes's first fierce emotion was one of gladness.

Then he took a pull at himself, and his reasoning faculties began to assert themselves. Who could have done this thing? There were only six people on the island altogether—two inoffensive Kanaka boys besides Cosmos and the three Europeans—and from the moment that dinner had been served, Cosmos had not moved a yard from the kitchen. A wild desire for human companionship gripped Barnes like a plague. He stepped down from the verandah and

fled like a hunted thing in the direction of the hut where Denton had made his headquarters, and where he gave employment to the other Kanaka boys. The American was seated outside his shanty, smoking a green cigar and drinking some cool, seductivelooking mixture from a long tumbler by his side.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "You look a heap troubled. Sit down and have a drink."

"Gride has been murdered," Barnes said hoarsely. "He went to sleep on the verandah instead of coming to dinner—you know his way—and when I went out just now, I found him with his head almost severed from his body."

"Not much loss, anyway," Denton drawled.
"Very likely, but that isn't the point.
Who could have done it? Not Cosmos, I swear."

"And not my boys, either, for they haven't been outside the hut ever since I came back. It seems to lie between you and me, Barnes. I suppose you haven't seen red yourself——"

"I see red every day," Barnes said bitterly; but my hands are clean, thank God. I can't think. I am wearied and worn out, and my brain is numb. Come over to the bungalow with me, like a good chap, and see what you can make of it."

But it was very little that the American had to suggest. They carried the dead man into his room and covered him over with a sheet, and then Denton began to ask

questions.

"Tell me everything," he said, "and don't omit any detail, however small. There aren't many details in a case like this, and, if you don't mind, I'll take this razor home with me. I should like to put it under my microscope, and don't you forget that I am some naturalist as well as a collector of butterflies, and I know as much about this amazing household of yours as you do yourself. Now, there's only one thing for it. You go quietly off to bed and sleep, if you can, and I'll come and talk it over with you in the morning, and if you take my advice, you'll have a few grains of morphia yourself. If ever I saw anybody who needs a drug, you are the hairpin in question."

It was about eleven the following morning when Denton lounged up to the bungalow, cool and collected as usual, with a smile on his face and a general suggestion of being

master of the situation.

"Well," Barnes said wearily—"well?"

"I think I've got it," Denton said. "I worried it all out last night, and I found something on the handle of that razor that confirms my suspicions. Where's Crim?"

"Oh, how do I know? And what on earth has the chimpanzee got to do with it? As a matter of fact, I haven't seen him

this morning."

"Now, you just come with me and bring a gun. When we have found Crim, I'll go

on with the story."

Since the previous evening the chimpanzee had not been seen. He had not even come in for his breakfast. They found him presently high up in the centre of a clump of cocoa-nut palms, from which he nodded and chattered and showed his teeth in defiance. He seemed to be filled with a rage and terror that was quite foreign to his usual friendly and peaceful demeanour. Without a word, Denton raised his gun and shot the simian clean through the heart.

"That's as good as murder!" Barnes cried, aghast. "What did you do that cold-blooded

thing for?"

"Waal, I guess we couldn't haul Crim up before a court of justice," Denton said. "We couldn't bring him before a jury and the rest of the fixings. In these parts, when you meet a murderer, you just shoot him. It's rough-and-ready justice, but it's just as effective. And I shot your chimpanzee, because he it was who murdered Gride. Not that I care anything about Gride, but when an animal takes to that kind of thing, he never stops. Now, look here, sonny, it's like this. When you told me all those details last night, I began to see my way. To a

certain extent I was rather fond of Crim—he was as near a human as makes no matter, and he hated Gride almost as much as you did. Look how the poor brute had suffered at the hands of that cold-blooded piece of human machinery. Look at the times he has been operated upon without an anæsthetic, and him big and strong enough to strangle Gride as easy as I can stick a pin through a butterfly. I tell you, Crim was waiting his chance. Didn't he see the little banana monkey have its throat cut? And wasn't everything ready to his hand when Gride went to sleep on the balcony last night? Why, it was as if that chap had been giving Crim an object-lesson. And Crim took advantage of it. He watched Gride till he went to sleep, and then he took the razor and cut the throat of the man that he had hated and feared and loathed more than anything that crawled on earth. And he had his revenge all right."

"Seems almost incredible," Barnes said.

"But how are you going to prove it?"

Denton took an envelope from his pocket.

"I told you I was a naturalist," he said.

"Anyway, I've studied the habits of the simian, and I know what he's capable of. Besides, I took that razor home last night for a purpose, and in the haft I found what I expected to find—a few hairs, which I have examined under the microscope. And those hairs came from Crim, beyond the shadow of a doubt. And I think that ought to satisfy you, as well as it satisfies me. At any rate, you are free now, and if any man ever earned his money, that man's name is Wilfred Barnes."

# THE FLET.

"UPON my furrowed face a touch I love! And Vulcan's offspring, orderly about My brow in battle phalanx, greatly move; And insect warcraft near and far throughout My vastness wander, in a smooth commotion; Fearless of me—Old Ocean.

Children of Æolus, come!—cease your games,
Messengers mine, forth to the uttermost
Of these thus braving me, and bring their names—
The wafted answers echo, coast to coast,
Blending one mighty voice my ears to greet,
Pealing—'I am the Fleet!'"

BERTRAM AYRTON.

## THE DAWNSTAR

### By FRED M. WHITE

Illustrated by Steven Spurrier



HE island of Bavia lay fused like some rare pearl in the heart of the golden Java Sea, that stretched away to the trembling horizon, with Ketapang looming out of it like a broken harp. Sea and sky

blended together in a golden mist that lay light as thistledown upon an ocean of pathless blue, and everywhere was a suggestion of that golden land where it is always afternoon. And, looking down upon it from the back of the sloping beach, where the great tree-ferns trembled overhead, a man and a woman sat, as they had been sitting the last hour or more. He was young and lean and brown, with the sanguine eyes of youth that is ever seeking something, and not discouraged because so far he has not found it. And the girl by his side was small and dark and exquisitely made, a sort of Spanish Venus, in fact, with the dreamy sleepiness in her eyes that she inherited, perhaps, from some Velasquez ancestress. She was plainly dressed enough, in a linen skirt and jacket, and her luxuriant mass of dusky hair was innocent of any covering; her feet were bare, too, and the skirt of her dress came only a little below her knees, for she and her companion had been paddling in the lagoon at their feet in search of rare anemones, and, anyhow, it was Inez Barrington's mood never to wear shoes if it could possibly be avoided. She was at heart a creature of the fields and the woods, but there was breeding and pride of race in every line of her. She could speak freely enough, if she liked, of those Spanish ancestors of hers, and time had been when she had known the restrictions of school life in San Francisco; but that was before she had come out there to look after her father's house and keep that dreamy widower under

some sort of affectionate subjection. All that had happened five years ago, and in that time she had seen John Barrington's more or less prosperous tobacco plantation drifting into decay, and the army of workers driven away, one by one, till not more than half a dozen of them remained. She had been long enough there to see the bacienda become little better than a creeper-clad ruin, picturesqueenough, no doubt, behind its luxurious blaze of blossoms, and still comfortable in a Bohemian sort of way. For, sooth to say, John Barrington was a dreamer and a visionary, and ever a seeker after the will-o'-the-wisp.

The two sitting there, looking out over the lagoon, had been discussing the shiftless Barrington, and, incidentally, the girl's future. There was just a tiny cloud now in those glorious dark eyes of hers, and a droop

of the proud scarlet lips.

"Oh, this is a paradise, all right," Frank Preston said—"a paradise where I should be quite prepared to linger on, but for thought of the future. You know, we are all alike, Miss Barrington—all of us ever grasping for the phantom fortune and ignoring the chances that lie at our feet. I am the last man in the world to reproach your father."

The girl laughed gently and turned those velvety eyes upon Preston's face for a moment. There was something in that glance that

stirred his heart just a little.

"I know," she said simply, "and sometimes I have meant to speak to you about it. Do you know, I never quite understood why you came here at all, and, for some reason, I have always regarded you as a man of independent fortune."

"Haven't a cent," Preston said lazily.

"I am a sort of object-lesson, a kind of idle apprentice. For ten years I have been floating about the world, seeking my fortune, but not very strenuously, I must own. I drifted here through Burma and Siam, looking for the Dawnstar."

"So I have heard you say before," Inez smiled. "Mr. Preston, what precisely is

the Dawnstar ?"

"I am not altogether sure that such a thing exists," Preston explained. "It's a sort of religion, I believe, like the famous gold mines in the Yukon, or the fabulous diamond that someone is always going to find in South Africa. They talked of it in Siam, under a different name, and they whisper of it in Borneo. It's like those pearls your father is always talking about—the pearls that he firmly believes lie at the bottom of the lagoon at our feet."

"But his late partner found them," Inez

said.

"Blind luck," Preston replied—"absolutely blind luck. There! Now listen to me. What right have I to blame your father because he has wasted his life trying to find pearls that don't exist, when I am doing exactly the same thing with regard to the Dawnstar? In our heart of hearts, neither of us believes that there are either pearls or Dawnstars."

"And yet my father's late partner found the pearls here," Inez said. "Not that I believe there are any left. But tell me—

what is the Dawnstar?"

"Well, it's a fabulous orchid. Wherever I go in this archipelago, I can always find some superstitious native who has heard of it, or who has heard of somebody who has seen it. No doubt there is some basis to he legend, and I have been fool enough to spend the best part of a year in these parts

trying to verify it."

There was a good deal of truth in what Preston said, but it was not the whole truth. He would never have stayed there so long, with the wanderer's virus in his veins, had it not been that he had given his heart to Inez Barrington, and that he was lingering there awaiting events. He perfectly understood how near the dreamy Englishman was to the verge of ruin, and how near he stood on the edge of the grave, and what would become of Inez afterwards was a problem that troubled Preston a great deal more than his search after the elusive Dawnstar. He had come there to investigate the legend, but it seemed to him that he had found something much more precious instead. And gradually his whole mind had become absorbed in Inez's future. He had been there for months, staying in the ruined old hacienda, seeing Inez day by day, studying all the beauties of that open mind of hers, and vainly regretting all his lost

opportunities. There were the nights, of course, when he went out looking for the visionary Dawnstar, that was supposed to bloom only in the early hours between dusk and dawn; but so far he had not found it.

He smiled with an air of superior wisdom when he saw Barrington wasting his time and neglecting his property over the brooding hours he spent on the lagoon in search of those mystic pearls, and occasionally he was conscious of a certain contempt for his own weakness. And day by day he could see that the 'dread consumption that was sapping Barrington's life was advancing nearer and nearer, and the problem of Inez's future troubled him more and more.

"Let us be practical for once," Inez said.
"What real good would the Dawnstar do for

you if you found it?"

"Well, it would make my fortune, for one thing," Preston said. "It might be worth anything up to a hundred thousand pounds. There are men in England who think nothing of paying twenty thousand pounds for a new orchid. If I could get a few Dawnstars and distribute them judiciously, I should be a rich man. And, mind you, the thing actually does exist, because an Indian raja had one. It was destroyed by fire, but the thing undoubtedly was there, because a German collector I once met actually saw it. A lovely thing, Inez. Picture to yourself a plant that blooms in the early dawn or by artificial light, a plant that grows on slender threads no thicker than a cobweb, but strong enough to carry a cloud of blooms that resemble a collection of tropical butterflies. Twenty different blends of gorgeous colouring on one plant, and every separate bloom distinct. It rises in the primrose dusk from a handful of flat leaves, much as the Rose of Sharon blooms before it drops back into nothingness and leaves behind it what appear to be a few dusty, dead leaves. believe it is an epiphyte—that is, a tree parasite—in other words, it clings to a dead stump. Or possibly it is a tuber. But I don't know. I am only telling you what I have been told. We might even be sitting on it at the present moment. You may laugh at me, if you like, but I believe it is here somewhere, and, if it is, I am going to find it. I wonder if your father has heard of the thing?"

"I think it is exceedingly probable," Inez smiled. "He has never mentioned it, but then he knows I have not much sympathy with those dreams of his. He is full of all

sorts of stories of that kind—pearls in the lagoon, buried treasure, and all that sort of thing. I am perfectly convinced that, if my father had lived in the time of Jason, he would have volunteered to go off in search of the Golden Fleece. We will ask him, if you like. I am sure he will be enthusiastic."

They turned their backs on the golden sea presently, and wandered through the treeferns to the verandah of the house, where, amongst the bowery blooms that hung like dazzling jewels, they found Barrington, with his coffee and cigarettes, awaiting them. He was a small, slender man, with an eye of a dreamer and the peculiar waxen complexion of one who is far gone in consumption. With his scientific knowledge, it was patent enough to Preston that the end was not far off. For a little time they sat there talking, before Inez introduced the subject of the Dawnstar. Barrington's eyes lighted eagerly as he listened. At the same time his smile was one of toleration for the weakness of another.

"I have heard something about it," he said. "Indeed, I am not so sure I haven't seen the thing. When I go down to the lagoon in the early morning, dredging for those big oysters, I seem to notice certain flowers that are not familiar to me; and, when I come back, they are no longer there. But it is only in one place—as you go down the path by the spring where Inez grows some of those rare ferns she is so fond of. There used to be some trees at the back of the spring, and I believe that the stumps of them are there still. But it's no use asking You are only wasting your time, Preston. Now, if you will come with me some night down to the lagoon-

The dreamer was mounted on his hobby now, and for some time he babbled more or less incoherently of the treasures that lay in the depths of the lagoon, if only it was possible to find them. He told his audience for the fiftieth time how his partner had accidentally come upon a strata of pearlbearing oysters in the lagoon, where it had been possible to dredge them up, and how that aforesaid partner had returned to England with a fortune in his pocket. But he did not know, or he forgot to say, that for a year or two afterwards every idle native who could command a canoe and a dredge had raked the floor of the lagoon until there was not a single bivalve left. It was all very pathetic and a little ridiculous, but Preston, looking across at that beautiful face opposite him, could see nothing but the tragic side of the situation.

And it did not seem ridiculous to him, as he lay awake that night, to think that Barrington's story had been the means of stirring his own latent hopes. Surely the Dawnstar was there somewhere, if he could only find it. And, if he could, then his problem and the problem of Inez's future would be solved. If he could once come upon the track of the Dawnstar, he would be able to speak the words which had been trembling on his lips for months, and put his fortune to the test. Not that he was afraid of what the answer would be, for Inez's nature was too frank and free to leave him with any illusions on that score. But come what may, and poor as he was, he was not going to turn his back upon the island of Bavia until he knew what was going to happen with regard to the woman whom he loved.

As he lay on his bed, waiting for the dawn, his mind was troubled with many things. He had not been quite candid with Inez when he had spoken to her in that detached wayabout the Dawnstar. He had not told her, for instance, that the search for that elusive flower was almost as great an obsession with him as the treasures of the lagoon were with John Barrington. He had not told her that he had been following up a legend for years. He had tracked it in various ways and in various languages half through Asia and, by way of Siam, to the island of Borneo. He believed in its existence thoroughly, though he would have been ashamed to admit it. Indeed, a certain deceased German collector had actually seen it.

Therefore, in all the months that Preston had been on Bavia, he had been looking for the Dawnstar night after night. Ever since the first day that he had entered the hacienda and had become a member of that somewhat Bohemian household, he had been out before dawn in the swamps and round the lagoon, always looking for the Dawnstar. And yet he was deeply sorry for Barrington, whom he could not but regard as a fool and a visionary. He was the only man about the place who knew that Barrington spent half his nights in secret visits to the lagoon, where he was wearing out the little strength that remained to him in dredging up oyster shells, and, apparently, never tired of his pursuit. If Barrington had devoted a tithe of his time to his estate, he might by this time be a prosperous man. But the pathetic part of the tragedy lay in the fact that Barrington had no illusions on the matter of his health. and that he was doing all this in the forlorn hope of being able to leave a competence to

his only child.

And this was going on night after night; it went on still for weeks after the day when Preston had told Inez the history of the Dawnstar. It went on till one early dawn when Preston was out on his eternal search, and hanging more or less disconsolately around the spring, at the back of the lagoon, from whence the house derived its watersupply. It was still dark, with the first suggestion of pallid rose in a morning sky, as Preston wandered down towards the lagoon in the aimless fashion that had become habitual to him—the aimless fashion of a man who begins to despair of his object. As he sat there, with a half-made cigarette between his fingers, Barrington passed him so closely that he could actually have touched him. The elder man was carrying some appliance on his back, and then, as Preston looked at him, he saw that the other was walking in his sleep.

Barrington was obviously worn out; his face was pale and drawn, and ever and again a hollow cough broke from him. It was bad for him to be out there in the dews of the early morning—fatally bad, no doubt—but he crept along down to his boat like a man in the last stages of exhaustion, a man whose will was evidently stronger than his body. He made his way slowly and laboriously into the middle of the lagoon, and from the bank Preston watched him for some time until suddenly he saw the dark figure collapse and crumble as if it had been an empty sack, and then there followed the sound of a faint

splash.

Preston was on his feet in a moment. He plunged headlong into the lagoon and swam out to the floating figure. It was a strenuous fight, but he had Barrington on the sand at length, still breathing, so he gathered the shrunken figure in his arms and carried

him towards the house like a child.

His mind was set now only on getting Barrington into bed, so that any thought of the Dawnstar was very far away just then. But as he was passing along the little hollow amongst the tree-ferns at the back of the spring, a solitary flower, all gold and azure, that seemed to be floating invisibly in the air, a foot or two from the ground, caught his attention and held him there for a moment absolutely motionless. Then he turned his face resolutely away and plodded on doggedly in the direction of the hacienda.

He would not think of it. He would not believe anything till he had the burden in his arms safe between a pair of blankets. It must have been some figment of imagination, some phantasm born of the early dawn.

So presently he laid Barrington on his bed and warmed him, and forced brandy between his lips until the sick man opened his eyes and feebly asked what had happened. Preston made him comprehend presently—indeed, told Barrington how he had been watched night by night, whilst the latter listened and nodded before he sat up and

grasped Preston by the hand.

"Not a word of this to Inez," he whispered. "I am a fool, perhaps, but then I have always been a fool—ever grasping for the shadow and neglecting the substance. Did you ever know an Irishman who did anything else? But I shall find it—I shall find it before I have done—yes, long before you find that Dawnstar that you were telling

me about the other night."

Preston smiled almost bitterly. He knew that hopeful outlook only too well. crept away presently to his own room, and slept far into the morning. For the rest of the day he seemed rather to avoid Inez. He sat on the verandah in the evening, listening whilst she sang to him, and retired early to bed, but not to sleep. He tossed about from side to side till it seemed to him that the window frame in his bedroom began to stand out sharply against the darkness, and he arose and crept from the house like a thief. and made his way down to the spring. For a long time he sat there watching, as far as possible, the dusky area where he had seen that spirit blossom the night before. watched until the ebony dusk turned to violet, and the tree-ferns behind him looked like gigantic feathers grotesquely painted on the sombre sky. He watched until his eves began to ache and water stood in them. Then very slowly and gradually, like an amazing conjuring trick that he had witnessed in some Eastern bazaar, a faint intangible something-a collection of intangible somethings-began to materialise slowly and mysteriously against an opaque purple background. They came one by one, darting here and there like spirits, intangible, floating in nebulous space, and yet arranged in a sort of symmetrical order, one above the other. like so many painted blooms indented by an unseen hand in a great vase. They were detached, and at the same time formed part of some harmonious whole, as if a painter had placed them there without supports.

And, as Preston watched, he stiffened with an excitement that seemed to paralyse his very breathing. He could see the colours of the blooms by now-azure, purple, violet, pink, all the hues of the rainbow with their various blends and shades. There must have been five-andtwenty blooms at least, magnificent, glowing, full of life and beauty, and yet apparently living alone in the air. There must be a support somewhere, as Preston knew, but the stems were so fine and slender as to be absolutely invisible. They flowers of Paradise, nothing less, a gleam of beauty and colouring surpassing a naturalist's dreams. Preston dragged himself to his feet and took from his pocket a tiny glow-lamp to which a small dry battery was attached. Still trembling from head to foot in his excitement and admiration, he examined his treasure carefully and with the critical eye of the expert. could see now, by the aid of the lamp, that those black filaments binding the glorious bonquet together were as fine and yet as strong as the metal filaments in an electric lamp. And then, as the dawn suddenly broke like a violet bombshell from behind the morning mists over the lagoon,

"Then he turned upon it the light of the glow-lamp."

those amazing blooms collapsed

like a soap bubble, and nothing was left but a handful of tight green leaves clinging to a log of wood about the size of a man's thigh. Preston knelt almost reverently and raised the rotting log in his arms. A few minutes later it was hidden away in a dark corner of his bedroom and covered with a damp cloth.

He had found it now, the search of years was finished, and the future lay plainly before him. Being a naturalist, he had seen quite enough to know that the plant he had secured was a large one, and that, in the hands of any wise horticulturist, the thing was capable of subdivision. It meant that, once he was safely home again, a fortune awaited him. And yet, even in that moment, he was conscious of the fact that he probably owed his amazing luck entirely to the other man, whose failure had brought about his own splendid chance.

He said nothing about his find for the moment, and all the more so because Barrington was still confined to his bed, and likely to remain there for a day or two. But when dinner was over, and night had fallen at length, Preston expressed a desire to have his coffee on the verandah, and there, in the dusk, with Inez by his side, told her what he

had seen the night before.

"You quite understand what I mean," he said. "We must get your father away from here. If he doesn't go, he will die. He must go back to England; he must have a winter in Switzerland. If we could get him back to some bracing climate, he might live for years. As it is—"

"Oh, I know, I know!" Inez sighed.

"But what can we do?"

"You must let me do it for you," Preston said. "You really must. Did it never occur to you how kind you have been to me? I have been here for a year. I came as a total stranger, and you took me at my own valuation. I shall never forget it, Inez. And I believe I can help you."

"You have found the Dawnstar?" Inez

asked demurely.

By way of reply, Preston rose and, going to his room, returned presently with the log,

which he laid carefully down on the verandah. Then he turned upon it the light of the glow-lamp, which gleamed in the darkness through a violet shade exactly like the rays of the early dawn.

"Watch!" he whispered. "Watch!"

Very gradually the mass of dusty leaves on the log began to expand until they turned over and showed their glossy undersides uppermost. Then a bloom appeared, followed by another and another a little higher up, until the whole glorious thing leaped into life, a creation of such beauty and tenderness and exquisite colouring that Inez cried aloud.

"It is wonderful," she said. "There was never anything like it since the beginning of the world. Tell me all about it, Frank. How did you find it, and where? I wonder if I might touch it, or would it fade away like a dream?"

Preston snapped off the light, and in a few moments the dusty leaves lay at his feet again. He carried the log into his room, and returned presently to the lighted diningroom, where Inez eagerly awaited him.

"You have seen it now, and must believe," he said. "Inez, you have seen our fortune

and our happiness."

As he spoke he looked into the girl's shining eyes, and she came forward and threw an arm around his neck.

"You mean that, Frank?" she whispered.

"And you know—oh, yes, I have been waiting to hear you say that for a long time. And you know it, too."

Preston drew her close and kissed her.

"Yes," he said simply, "I did. But can't you see that I could not speak before? I had no right to speak. But now it is all different. Now I have found something that is infinitely more precious to me than all the Dawnstars that ever bloomed. Not that I am indifferent to it, either, because it means happiness and fortune to us, and, I hope, many years of life yet for your father, because he is going to share it, because without him there would never have been you, and without him there never would have been a Dawnstar to light us on our way."



# THE GREEN GROVE OF SHALTH

## By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

Illustrated by Frank Gillett

AUROY, the hashish smoker at Saigon, made me write this story. He tormented me night and day with questions about Count Henri Flamant and Mademoiselle Gueldy. He wanted me to tell him of the Shan monk, the circular depths, and the grove of green.

"Why are you so curious about these things?" I asked him one day, when he

had nearly driven me crazy.

"I might write a story about them," he said.

"Oh," I snarled, "you might, might

you?"

I shut my mouth then—shut it tight. I was a fool, but I wasn't going to let a crazy dope fiend get away with me—not much—so I'm writing here the story that Mauroy wanted to write. He might have done it better. He was an educated man, a great naturalist before he took to smoking the hemp, but there are little things that I could never make him understand. I mean incidents like the trip across the polished strip of granite, and also the look of the grove of green when we entered it.

I am a fool. I was born in Chartres Street, in the old French quarter of New Orleans, and the first wish I had was a desire to change into the big monkey old Pete Rondepierre kept in his shop near the corner of Royal Street and St. Anthony's Alley. The monkey got as many nuts as he could eat, and he sat in the sun and made faces at everyone who passed by, so I envied

him.

I guess I copied that monkey a lot. I took what was given me, and made faces at those who wouldn't give. Kept moving, too. Seen most of the world. Can write a hobo's Baedeker of most big towns from "Chi" to Melbourne, and from Paris to Penang.

I've made a ten spot a day with good emotional stuff in Market Street, 'Frisco, and I've made the same amount in gathering shillings from the big betters as the cabs rolled along Moore Park to Randwick Racecourse. I've played the stranded American to rich tourists who came to Kandy to look at the horse's tooth that old Buddha is supposed to have hacked his chupatties with, and I've played the same tale on the Bubbling Well Road when an American battleship struck Shanghai. I'm a two-handed, pull-it-out-of-'em fool, and I'm not denying it.

It was in Sydney that I met Count Henri Flamant, and Mademoiselle. Gueldy, and Mademoiselle's aunt, Madame D'Herlys. I struck a financial sand-bar in Sydney, and I was sleeping regularly under the big Moreton Bay fig trees in the Outer Domain, and fighting the wolves at the soup kitchen for enough to give me the strength

to talk.

Then came a lucky morning. I saw Count Henri steaming down Castlereagh Street, and, feeling certain that he was French, I dug for a wad of Creole lingo that I had learned from the Cajuns down on Bayou La Fourche, and I heaved it at him.

"French?" he asked.

"Creole," I answered, blessing old Pirate Jean Lafitte, whose buried treasure had sent me hunting down through the Louisiana swamps. "My great-great-grandfather came to New Orleans with Buck Grenelle." It was a lie, but an empty stomach has no respect for the truth.

Count Henri Flamant stood and chatted with me for fifteen minutes; then he offered me a job as his valet and courier, and I took it. Sydney was as unsympathetic as a bear with a boil on his nose, and Count Henri Flamant looked to me like an ice-cold bottle of beer in the middle of the Desert of Gobi.

I met Mademoiselle Gueldy and Madame D'Herlys at the Oxford Hotel, where Count Henri was staying. Mademoiselle was the Count's fiancée, and Madame was the young lady's aunt, who chaperoned her.

All that day and the next I wondered what the Count was after; then I found out. He told me one morning before breakfast.

"Fenton, we're going northward," he said.

"Yes, sir," I murmured.

"Up into the Malay Archipelago," he went on. "We'll probably touch at a number of the islands—Borneo, Java, Sumatra, and the Celebes."

"Yes, sir," I said, wondering, as I listened, if Brisbane would be a good spot to unhook myself from the job and again put my trust

in the greatest of all the virtues.

And just as I was trying to recall all I had ever heard about Brisbane, the Count opened up his secret chamber and took me into his confidence.

"Fenton," he said, "I'm searching for something."

"Yes, sir," I murmured.

"It's something strange, Fenton," he continued.

"I bet it is," I said.

He looked at me for a moment without speaking, then he turned his back and spoke hurriedly, as if he was a little ashamed of what he was saying.

"I'm hunting for a place that I have never seen—a dream place. Do you

understand?"

"Not quite, sir," I said.

"Well, I have an obsession regarding a grove of green trees," explained Count Henri. "It's a grove on the top of a hill—a great bunch of trees with thick juicy leaves."

"And you never saw the trees?" I said.

"Never saw them except in a dream?"

"I seem to see them always," answered the Count. "Sleeping or waking, I can't shut them out of my vision."

"That's curious," I said.

"It's not an unusual case," Count Henri went on. "A number of people have vivid impressions about places that they have never seen, but the one that I've got makes life unbearable. I'm travelling to find it. It's somewhere in the Tropics, I'm certain. I—I don't suppose you ever came across a grove of trees like a great green cupola covering a high hill?"

"I don't think I did," I answered. "No, I

don't believe I ever did."

"Well," said Count Henri, "we've got to find it, Fenton. I thought you'd be useful, because you've travelled such a lot. And now—well, you'll help, won't you, Fenton?"

"Sure," I cried, a bit surprised at the way he talked. "Sure, I'll help. If I can hunt up any dope about this place with the green

trees, I'll pass it on to you."

I went out into Cook Park after that talk with Count Henri Flamant, and I sat down and thought about him and Mademoiselle Gueldy and Madame D'Herlys. I had only taken a job with Count Henri because I was down and out, and I didn't intend to stay with him after we struck Brisbane; but that story of his about the green grove sort of interested me. It was a little bit like a fairy tale, and I liked it. Mind you, there was nothing of the fool about Count Henri, and I had a notion that I didn't throw much dust in his eyes with my talk about French grandfathers who had to scoot away to save their Loyalist heads. Possibly I mixed up the dates and named a year when a Loyalist was safer in France than in Louisiana.

Well, we went from Sydney to Brisbane in a Huddart Parker boat that rolled like a barrel shooting Niagara. But I began to like the job of courier to Count Henri and the ladies. It was a cinch. I knew the Count would have given quite a lump of money to see that grove of green trees, but he didn't communicate his obsession in any great extent to me. I couldn't altogether see what he'd get out of the sight when he did locate the grove. But Count Henri thought different, and so did Mademoiselle Gueldy.

We butted up from Brisbane to Thursday Island, nosing along the Great Barrier Reef through nice hot seas, with the water looking like a million oily snakes wriggling away across the Coral Sea, Count Henri sitting on the deck with Mademoiselle Gueldy and her aunt, and thinking always of the grove of green trees.

"We'll find it somewhere up here in the Malay, Fenton," he would say; "I feel

certain we will."

"I hope so, sir," I would answer. But I really wasn't worrying much about it—not then. Afterwards the thing got me as bad as it did Count Henri, but on the early part of the trip I didn't get much excited.

This reads like a queer tale now that I put it down here—a young Frenchman with lots of money and a crazy desire to find a bit of scenery that he had dreamed of, his fiancee, her aunt, and I sailing along with him to help.

We went from Thursday Island up through the Banda Sea to spice-scented Amboyna, and from there to Macassar. At Macassar we took a Dutch East India packet to Batavia, and it was at Batavia that Count Henri got the notion that he was "getting warm." The lay of the country made him think that he was close to the green hill of his dreams, and his excitement communicated itself to Mademoiselle Gueldy and Madame D'Herlys. It woke me up a little, too. Count Henri acted like a hound that's hot on the scent of a 'possum, and I began to wonder what would be in that green grove of trees, if we ever located it. It seemed a curious business, and all sorts of thoughts about treasure and pirate charts and things came into my mind. I asked Count Henri if he thought there would be treasure in the grove; but he shook his head. "I don't think so, Fenton," he said. "I don't want treasure. I've got more money than I can use now, so I hardly think I'd get such a curious obsession about a place where treasure was concealed."

But I thought different. I told myself every day that there was money in the grove, if we could ever locate it. I asked Count Henri to describe the leaves of the trees, and I questioned everybody I met about fat green leaves that were fully six inches long and as thick as sole-leather. And I'm going to confess something right here. I had a notion that, if I ever found that grove when I was doing a walk by myself, I'd investigate it a little before informing Count Henri. The Count was a good fellow, but I'd been looking out for Billy Fenton for such a long time that I'd got sort of attached to myself.

Up from Batavia to Sarawak we went, Count Henri getting more excited with every league we covered. It was the vegetation that upset him. Seemed as if he had a dim idea of the country that surrounded that dream groye of his, and the landscapes in the northern part of the quarry, the moment we entered the mouth of the river and steamed up toward the capital. He was half crazed with delight, although there wasn't anything that could be called a big hill in the rice swamps on each side of the river.

"But it's here, it's here 1" he cried. And Mademoiselle Gueldy looked at him with her wonderful topaz eyes and clapped her little hands with joy. Mademoiselle Gueldy and her aunt knew no more about the grove than I knew, but the girl loved Count Henri, and she had travelled half round the world with

him to find the place the visions of which tormented him night and day.

"I'm so glad!" she cried, as Count Henri assured her that he was near the end of his search. "I'm so pleased that you are near your dream grove."

It looked as if Count Henri had picked the right spot, if one could judge by the Count's looks. On that first day in Saigon he walked round with his head in the air, sniffing the breezes as if he recognised them

as old friends.

"It's here, Fenton," he cried-"some-

where quite close to us!"

I was a bit puzzled on that first day in Saigon. There was a French warship there, but Count Henri had no time for the officers. One of them recognised him and spoke to him on the street, but Count Henri flushed and got away in a mighty big hurry.

"Huh!" I said to myself. "This boss of mine finds the Tropics not quite as warm as France." But if he was a slacker, it wasn't my business. The good old United States

wasn't in the mess at that moment.

And on that very afternoon I made the great discovery. I went exploring on the river front, and there, in a sampan, I found a monk from the hills, a brown, greasy fellow, who sat in the sun with a chawat round his loins and a bunch of leaves covering the shaved crown of his head.

Those leaves held my eyes and dragged me toward the sampan. They were long green leaves, as thick as sole-leather, the leaves that Count Henri Flamant had described to me a score of times since I

met him in Sydney.

I didn't stop running till I reached the hotel, and I stammered out the news to Count Henri. Back to the river we went at a run, and the moment Count Henri saw the leaves he unloosed a yell of joy that you could have heard down at Pulo Condor.

"We've found it!" he screamed. "They

are leaves from the grove!"

I don't know everything that the Shan monk told Count Henri Flamant. The monk knew only a smattering of French, and Count Henri had to get a lot of the yarn through an interpreter; but it was such a wonderful yarn that my skin translated the parts of it that my ears couldn't understand. It made little shivers go up and down my spine in places where I couldn't get the meaning of a word he was saying; but he made all sorts of movements with his hands and his eyes and his mouth, and those movements helped.



Afterwards, at the hotel, I listened while Count Henri told the monk's story to Mademoiselle Gueldy and her aunt, and I pieced in the parts that I had missed. It was a great story that the monk told—a grand, blood-chilling story. He said that way up in the western part of Cochin China, in the outliers of the Elephant Mountains of Cambodia, was the green grove of Shalth, a grove of vlane trees, the leaves of which were the same as the leaves which he had

around his head. But he said no one could get to the grove because of the circular depths which surrounded it, and across which once went the devils of France in pursuit of a robber chief who made the grove his hiding-place. And, according to the monk, the path of granite over which the French followed the robbers was broken down by the evil spirits of the depths, so that none ever came back.

"It's the grove of my dreams!" cried



Count Henri, after he had finished telling the story to the two ladies. "I am going to start with Fenton to-morrow morning."

"What about us?" cried Mademoiselle

Gneldy.

"You must wait here till I come back," said the Count. "The country is too wild for you to travel in."

"But, Henri, I must go!" cried his

sweetheart. "I must! I must!"

I don't know how long the Count and

his fiancee debated that question. I know that the matter was unsettled at midnight, but when the dawn came I knew who had won. Mademoiselle Gueldy and her aunt were going to accompany the Count on his journey.

The monk came with us—the monk and his sampan—and four Annamese that he had rounded up at Count Henri's suggestion. I thought a lot about that trip before starting, but that dream grove pulled me

aboard the sampan. It was dreams of treasure that had made me, when a kid, run away from New Orleans and go hunting down through Barataria after Jean Lafitte's buried treasure, and I had great hopes about that dream grove, if the monk could locate it.

They don't keep any Pullman cars in Cochin China, and they're taking no bookings for state-rooms, either. Travelling in that quarter might not be as bad as it was in the days of Marco Polo, but old Marco would have a job to see the improvements if he

came back suddenly.

The rivers are the great travelling routes, and for days and days we paddled up the Mekong and its tributaries, twisting and turning, with flat stretches of paddy-fields on either side, broken here and there with patches of stunted trees. And all through those miserable days the monk sang an infernal song that pounded my brain to pieces. Sometimes—nearly always—I would wish that I had stayed in Saigon; then the monk's tale about the circular depths and the green grove would thrill me, and I would feel awfully pleased with the whole thing.

And then one morning, eleven days after leaving Saigon, we stepped from the sampan and tramped off toward the blue smear of the Elephant Mountains. Mademoiselle Gueldy and her aunt were brave in those days. Those two women had made up their minds to see that trip through to a finish, and they didn't whimper when the going was hard enough to tax the strength of a

husky man.

We came toward the circular depths one hot day at noon. The monk was fearfully excited. He jabbered away to himself as he led us forward, and his fear of the devils of that place was so great that he made the porters make camp a full mile from the place where the great abyss, like a bottomless moat,

encircled the grove of green.

We crept up a little velvety knoll, the grass as smooth as the lawn of a Montclair mansion, the green grove so close that we thought we could reach out our hands and pluck the fat leaves, and then, with a · suddenness that nearly took our breaths, we found ourselves on the edge of the circular depths.

I remember how I snorted like a frightened mule and backed away, tearing up whole handfuls of grass in my terror. I heard Count Henri cry out something in French that brought a little shriek from Mademoiselle

Gueldy. And then, with the hands of fear pushing us, we turned and rolled down the grassy ridge to the spot where the monk waited.

"The devils of the depths pushed you," said the monk solemnly, as we sorted ourselves out. "They do not allow anyone to

pass over into the grove."

But Count Henri Flamant was in no mood to take notice of the monk's words. He was annoyed with himself because the first glimpse of the chasm had brought a sudden rush of terror, but this fear went from him when he found his feet at the bottom of the little slope.

"Nonsense!" he cried. "We must find a place to cross over to the grove. Where

is the bridge?"

"The bridge is broken, as I told you," said the monk. "The evil spirits of the depths broke it down after the French devils crossed over. You can see the ruins of it."

"Where?" cried Count Henri.

The monk rose and moved to the northward, and we followed him, feeling, as we walked along, that the terrific chasm was close to us-the chasm with its jet-black depths that defied the lances of the sun.

The monk paused at a spot marked by a lightning-riven tree, and he pointed up the knoll, which was just as smooth and attractive as it was at the point we had crept up to

the riin.

"The bridge is there," said the monk-

"at least, the part of it that remains."

Count Henri, on hands and knees, started to climb up the little rise, and I followed him. Mademoiselle Gueldy, with fear in her big eyes, waited a moment, then, with a whispered word to her aunt, she followed after us, moving so quickly that she reached the top of the rise at the same moment as I did.

We found Count Henri looking at the remnants of the bridge. It was a shaft of red granite that sprang out across the black depths, the end nearest to us being firmly embedded in the rocky wall of the chasm, the other and unsupported end being three feet away from the farthest bank. This broken end was a little higher than the far rim, and as I looked at it I thought that nothing could inspire such clammy fear as that broken stretch of granite that reached blindly for a support. It was a horrible nerve-racking sight—a sight that made me want to shrick aloud in terror and flee the spot.

Count Henri woke me out of the trance of terror. He was crawling toward the bridge of granite, and he spoke sharply to me as I lay and clawed at the short grass.

"We must get across, Fenton," he said.
"But we—we can't," I stammered. "No

one can get across!"

Count Henri pointed to a log that rested upon the brink of the horrible abyss. "We must push that log out over the granite bridge," he said. "Come on! You and I will have to do the job. The monk is afraid."

I was afraid, too, but Mademoiselle Gueldy was looking at me, and with chattering teeth I crawled down to the edge of the great chasm and pulled at the log. It was a dangerous business, but the Count's desire immediately to cross the great trench made

him forget everything.

We got the log out upon the smooth bridge of granite, Mademoiselle Gueldy helping us by passing down ropes, so that we could bind it to the shaft of stone. The Count was half crazy with curiosity to see what the grove held for him, and he took chances on that bridge that made me gurgle.

When we had pushed the log forward, so that one end rested on the far bank, Count Henri started across the shaft of granite, straddling it and pulling himself along with his hands. The monk had crawled to the top of the bank to watch, and when he saw the Count moving over the abyss, he began to unloose the most mournful howls I ever listened to. His cries went down into that great pit and stirred echoes that were hair-raising.

"Shut up!" I yelled; and when he wouldn't stop howling, I flung a rock at his head as he peeped over the ridge. The rock hit him on the ear, and he bolted toward the camp, howling as he ran. The noise that monk made terrified me more than the great cleft

in the ground.

I had no intention of crossing that bridge
—at least, I had none when I threw the stone
at the monk—but things happened in the
next few minutes. Count Henri had moved
from the bridge of granite to the log, but
the moment he straddled the log it began to
teeter, as if it wanted to toss him into the
depths.

Mademoiselle Gueldy cried out in alarm, and when I looked up at her, she pointed out

across the bridge.

"Help him!" she screamed. "Quick! Steady the log!"

I guess I was mad. Mauroy, the hemp

smoker, reckoned I was mad. When she ordered me to help the Count, I obeyed her without thinking: I crawled out upon the stone bridge and steadied the log, and then, before I could recover my senses, Count Henri, on the bank of the chasm, put out his hand and gripped mine, and next minute I was in the grove, where the fat leaves of the vlane trees hung down like great green pods. A red snake marked with circles of black slid away from us as we stepped into the shadows of the trees, and I shivered as if I had the ague.

I've wondered a lot about that place. I'd like to see it again, just to check up the impressions I've got. It was weird and silent—a place that made me feel as if we had stepped suddenly from the heat of the Tropics into the dry cold of the Arctic. I had a notion to turn and scramble back across the bridge, but that dream stuff of Count Henri's held me with a thousand chains. I wanted to see what had brought him to that place, so I stayed, shivering like a cat in a rainstorm as I walked alongside him.

We hadn't far to go. About thirty paces from the bridge we came to the mouth of a small cave, and we entered it cautiously. The air in that place sucht as if it hadn't gone out for a stroll for half a century, and

the feel of the place scared me.

A slit in the roof made everything plain to us, and Count Henri and I stood for a minute inside the door and stared around in blind astonishment at what we saw. The place was littered with dead—men who had died over fifty years before, but whose bodies had been curiously preserved in the strange, dry air of that place. The floor of the cave was curiously slimy and moist, and most of the men lying on the floor had become part and parcel of it, the damp glazing them like a semi-transparent varnish.

There had been one beautiful fight in that place—a peach of a fight. Two bunches of men—French soldiers and Annamese robbers—had collided there, and the fight was so

warm that none came out alive.

And in that cave Count Henri found the motive that had brought him half-way round the world. One white man in that bunch that had invaded the cave had died with his back to the wall, and had left a circle of dead around him. As a matter of fact, he had died under the men he killed, and his sword was thrust up through the half-petrified bodies of two Annamese, whom he had skewered the moment before he died.

I don't know whether Count Henri Flamant had any knowledge of the discovery he was going to make. Perhaps he had. I think he had some curious intuition about things.

He took hold of the rusted blade of the sword and tried to pull it out; but the grip of the dead—the killed and the killer—was

upon it, and he gave up.

"Lend a hand, Fenton," he said. And I helped him pull the half-dried skeletons from the man whose uniform had turned into a fine grey dust, with rusted buttons and buckles strewn around him.

Count Henri Flamant took the big sword gently from the skeleton hand and held it up to the light. The hilt was of gold—dull gold—in which were a score or more of precious stones, and as I watched the Count he gave a little cry of surprise and pressed the gold hilt to his lips.

"Look!" he cried, holding the hilt out for me to look at. "See! It is the sword of my grandfather L Read! 'To Count Michel Henri Flamant, from his Emperor,

Napoleon III.'!"

There was another inscription on that big sword, and when Count Henri translated it to me, I guessed his secret. He read it stammeringly, his cheeks aflame. It ran—

I live for France!
Kings, Emperors, and Queens may turn to dust,
But France lives on! And coward he
Who, when the foeman comes,
Allows my biting edge to rust!

I suppose it's mighty hard on a man when his grandfather, fifty years dead, gives him a call down, but that's what Count Michel Henri Flamant did to his grandson, and the words on that sword-hilt hit Count Henri in his emotional solar plexus. He forgot everything but the sword, and I reckon the thoughts of the grove went from him the moment he read that inscription.

He seemed stunned, and I led him back to the bridge, neither of us speaking. I wanted to hold the sword while he crawled across the log; but he wouldn't let me touch it, so I followed him back over the circular depths to where Mademoiselle Gueldy and Madame D'Herlys waited for us.

I'm getting near the end of my story now. We got down to Saigon, and Count Henri Flamant took a French packet to Bordeaux. And he was in an awful hurry to reach

home, too.

"Do you want to come, Fenton?" he said.
"I—I mean, do you want to fight?"

"Not yet, sir," I answered. "I'm going

when my own crowd toes the line."

And I am, too. Old Ma Draft has got her left arm around my shoulder already, so

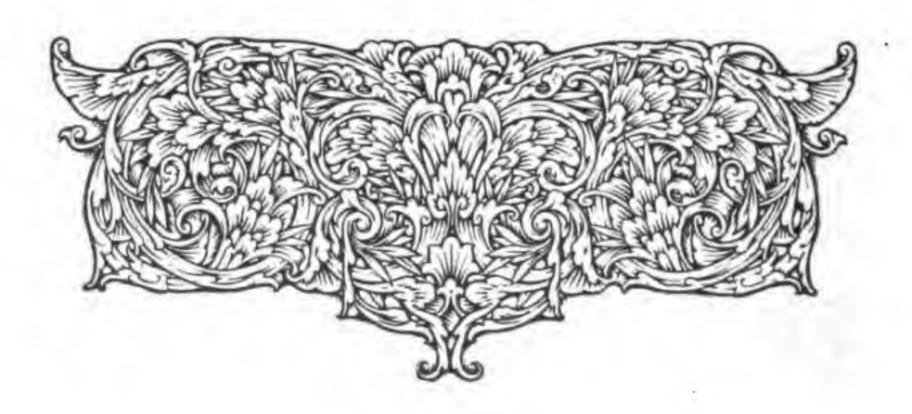
I won't be a hobo much longer.

Yesterday, in a moving picture theatre on Fourteenth Street, I saw a bunch of French officers being decorated by a big general, who was kissing them just as a fellow would kiss his best girl. And right at the top of that line was Count Henri Flamant. I yelled out his name and nudged an old fellow next to me in the ribs.

"I know that guy," I said -" the tall

fellow at the end."

But the old guy growled like a dog with a soup bone, and an asher came up and told me to be quiet.



## LIFE O' DREAMS

## By W. DOUGLAS NEWTON

Illustrated by W. R. Stott

A NSTEY buttoned up his waistcoat; he was smiling in his absent way. Lowndes fidgeted with his stethoscope, looked at his friend, and frowned.

Anstey pulled his slightly seedy coat about him, still smiling with the soft, vague good humour of dreaminess. He looked at Lowndes, and said suddenly, as though only just noticing his presence and purpose—

"Oh, am I ill?" Lowndes frowned

deeper.

"It's rather puzzling. You're not ill

organically, and yet you are."

Anstey's smile was rather more alert, his eyes twinkled quizzingly.

"Am I, for instance, ill enough to die?"

"Good Heavens, no!" burst out his friend,

profoundly shocked.

"All the same," said Anstey in his old positive way, that even now he sometimes assumed, "all the same, I shall be dead before the week is out."

Lowndes stared at his friend. Anstey was a queer fellow, and there was something mysterious about him. Since the doctor had renewed the acquaintance broken off at Cambridge so many years ago, he had come to see what a strange creature Anstey was. It was necessary to go carefully with him; there was some curious latent power underneath the fellow's dreaminess that could leap out at one and cut one up with uncanny skill if one made slips. Still, the facts were facts. He said briskly—

"As a doctor, let me tell you that you .

are talking rubbish."

Anstey's eyes closed as he laughed; there was some big reason for merriment behind them which Lowndes could not understand.

Anstey laughed.

"You think so?" he said. "All the same, I reaffirm the fact: before the week is out I

shall be dead."

Lowndes frowned—well, inwardly; before his patient he preserved an amiable and equable air. He felt that possibly he was up against some form of mania, a result of the queer life Anstey had led. He would have to knock some sense into the fellow.

"Let me also reaffirm the fact that you are talking rubbish, Bernard. Your case is queer, but the symptoms are absolutely petty. There is nothing in you which an ordinary tonic won't cure."

"What are my symptoms?" asked Anstey.

"They're queer," said Lowndes, "but extremely simple. You live the life of a steady old stick, yet, if I didn't know you, I should have declared you had been living too strenuously—burnt the candle at both ends, you know."

Anstey nodded, smiling as though agreeing.

Lowndes looked at him quickly.

"Did you—I mean—when you were up at Cambridge you were rather a—determined individual——"

"No," smiled Anstey, "I have been a steady old stick since I left Cambridge—

practically ever since."

"Oh," said Lowndes apologetically, but still eager to learn. "I didn't mean that I think you led a raffish life; I referred to hard work, rather. You were a devil for work, Bernard—you had an enormous appetite for it. You might have overdone it that way. Were you hard worked?"

"No," said Anstey. "No, not in the sense you mean. I became an insurance clerk six months after I left Cambridge. The work of an insurance clerk is not a very

great strain on the intelligence."

Lowndes smiled with him as he said that. Certainly the work of an insurance clerk was no very great strain upon such an intelligence as Anstey had had. Anstey's intelligence had been a phenomenon at Cambridge. He was one of your big men. He had a keen and tremendous brain. It was very freely prophesied that he would do great things in the world—such a well-equipped mentality and such a powerful personality were destined for the largest of all possible spheres. At Cambridge they were all certain that Anstey was one of those men who would carve out

a huge destiny and perhaps help regenerate the world.

And he had become an insurance clerk six months after leaving Cambridge. Lowndes thought this might be a clue both to his circumstances and his present indisposition.

"Was there any shock, any crisis, any great trouble after—after you left Cam-

bridge?"

"Nothing at all," smiled Anstey, quickly grasping what the doctor was driving at. "There was no actual reason why I should become an insurance clerk. My circumstances were slightly penurious, but quite pleasant. I took up clerking because it was offered, because it fitted in, because it was easy. No sudden upheaval of life or fortune made it necessary—I just became so from natural inclination—and because I wanted early hours to go to bed."

Lowndes opened his eyes in amazement.

"Sleep!" And then he said quickly: "I wonder? Is that an explanation? A sort of slow decay." He frowned. "No, it isn't that, Bernard. You're the most amazingly absent creature I know, but your wits are all right—much too all right for an insurance clerk. And, yes, by Jove, from what you tell me, your symptoms are rather those of sleeplessness than too much sleep." He stared at his friend. "Sleeplessness, good Heavens, and you have been spending half your days for the last two weeks asleep in that chair of yours!"

"I know," said Anstey. "But what you say is true—I mean about sleeplessness." He looked at his friend with pleasant slyness, as though about to launch a surprise. "I am not exactly asleep when I am dozing in that chair. I am, as a matter of fact, very much awake—only I am awake in

Kalbyna."

"What," asked the mystified Lowndes, "what, in Heaven's name, is Kalbyna?"

"Kalbyna," said Anstey slowly, watching his friend closely, "Kalbyna is a rather beautiful island in the East Indies, somewhere between the Nicobars and the Coral Seas. It is a rare place, Lowndes; I should like you to go there one of these days."

"I didn't know you had travelled," jerked

Lowndes.

"I haven't," said Anstey. "In the body I have not travelled. It is only when I shut my eyes in sleep in London that I go to Kalbyna and live my life there in my active dreams—and there I am to die, Austin."

Austin Lowndes stared at the man. He knew—or, at least, thought he knew—now

what was the matter with his old friend.

Anstey shook his head.

"No, my dear fellow, I'm not mad. I know it is difficult to understand, but I am telling you the truth. Don't try to find explanations; you won't find any. I myself have found none. Just take it for granted that what I am telling you is true. When I go to sleep in this lodging-house sitting-room of Warwick Street, Victoria, London, I am awake at once in Kalbyna, and live my life there, live it in splendid, active reality—so active that this life in London seems the dream."

Lowndes could only gasp.

"My dear fellow, my dear fellow, it's

preposterous-"

"It's whatever you like," said Anstey, with a sudden desperate earnestness, "only it is a fact. I want you, against your reason even, to accept it as a fact. That is why I have asked you specially to see me to-day. I want to tell you all the facts. I must, for I am going to die. I am going to die in Kalbyna—they have decided on that."

Lowndes frowned.

"Bernard," he stammered, "I don't know that it is possible to believe so incredible a story—"

Anstey pulled out a notebook, found a cutting from some work of reference in it,

and handed it to Lowndes.

Lowndes read the cutting carefully. It related to Kalbyna. It told how Kalbyna had risen from a primitive, petty, and rather cannibalistic island to be a centre of great industry and prosperity. The force that had brought civilisation to this barbarous place was the will of an Englishman, an Oswald Sleath, who had first become a settler, and then, like Brooke of Sarawak, had become the chief living force in the place. He had moulded the whole of its later destiny in a single great achievement. Lowndes read the paragraph and handed it back. Anstey gave him an old and rather worn photo cut from a newspaper; it was the photograph of a man clad in the duck suiting of the tropics.

"Who is that?" asked Anstey. Lowndes looked carefully at it. There was no doubt

as to who it was. He said-

"This is you, Bernard, of course." Anstey turned up the printed legend beneath the photo, which had been folded back and under. The inscription was—

"Oswald Sleath, the uncrowned King of

Kalbyna."

"Is that proof enough?" asked Austey.

"I don't understand-"

"And you won't understand. I don't want you to waste time trying. I want you to believe that I, Bernard Anstey, who goes to sleep here in Warwick Street, wake Oswald Sleath in Kalbyna. I am Oswald Sleath of Kalbyna. Will you believe that and listen to what I have to say? That's all I ask. Will you believe?"

"I'll believe, Bernard," said Lowndes

quietly.

Both the men sat down, and Bernard Anstey began talking at once. His odd dreaminess had come over him, but the power that one always felt to be latent in him, that seemed to be so strange in one in his present condition of life, was more

apparent than ever now. He said-

"You remember me well at Cambridge, Austin, I don't doubt. You remember that many, including myself, were agreed that I was bound to do big things in life. I was, as a matter of fact, determined to do big constructive things in life. I educated myself to that end; I prepared and planned. I didn't spare myself, Austin ; I worked hard, and I was capable of hard work, too. My mental equipment, I think—in fact, I know —was extremely well considered and well found. I knew I was fitted to play a rather important and useful part in the governance of the world, and I had made up my mind that I should play that part. Well, I have, though not in the way I had planned."

"In Kalbyna, you mean?"

"In Kalbyna instead of Westminster,"
said Anstey. "And I think Kalbyna is the
better; choice. I have made Kalbyna a
living, virile thing; at Westminster, what
should I have made? A reputation, perhaps,

but nothing as big as Kalbyna.

"I was a poor man, Austin, but that didn't worry me. I had ideas, and a brain to put them before the world. I could keep myself with my pen until I had made for myself an assured position. I came down from Cambridge with all my schedule of life planned to a month, all my arms and munitions ready. I remember I chose my rooms and my table at the club because both were bound to bring me into contact with the men who were going to be useful to me. I spent the first two months getting in touch with people. I got in touch with Ferris, of The Advance. When I had impressed him, I sat down and wrote an article—not a good article, but a deliberately popular one-containing some original and arresting ideas, which I knew that Ferris would buy on sight. He bought on sight."

"I read it," said Lowndes. "It was attractive and as stimulating as an aperitif.

I waited for more."

"You were meant to wait for more. You were meant to ask for more. That was my whole intention. And more was to follow—only no more was written. That night I went to bed early. I was tired, if pleasantly excited, and turned in at ten o'clock. I went to sleep at once—and at once was at Kalbyna."

He paused reflectively; there was a bright

glow of memory on his face.

"I was there abruptly, walking on the ramshackle quay, and the air was rich and hot all about me, and a great, soft, salt wind blew on me, and the sky was tremendous. There was a ship beside the quay. I can hear the slow hiss of her steam now, and the slop of the waves, and the gurgle of the tide on her rusty plates, and the cheeping of her straining warps. I can hear that, too. And I knew that I had just come to Kalbyna, and that Kalbyna was to be mine."

"One moment!" cried Lowndes. "You were in Kalbyna—you mean you dreamed you were in Kalbyna. You went to sleep

and dreamed it."

"I was in Kalbyna—dreaming or awake, I do not know; awake, I think, yet in one sense I was asleep; yet awake I must have been, for the things I did in Kalbyna. I am a real man there, Austin; this Oswald Sleath is not a dream person, and I am Oswald Sleath."

Lowndes made a gesture of hopelessness.

"But you weren't there; you were here—
what is it?—thousands of miles away."

"Was I, I wonder? You are trying to reckon a spiritual thing in material terms. What is space and time to the spirit? Space, nothing; time-well, ten o'clock here is morning in Kalbyna; the times fit in exactly. Morning exactly, Austin. I've sometimes wondered whether that explained things—the soul, the ego that closed its eyes here in sleep awoke in Kalbyna; the times fitted. I don't know whether it explains, but I think it does . . . During these last few weeks, when I have seemed to be sleeping all day, I was, in fact, sleeping all day, because day and night I have been awake in Kalbyna, awake and working, for there has been much to do."

"The sleeplessness, yes, that would fit in. too," said Lowndes.

" Van II amand Aman

"Yes," agreed Anstey.

"Go on," urged the doctor; "I won't

interrupt again."

Anstey paused and collected his thoughts. "I was on the quay by that rich and lambent sea, and I was looking at Kalbyna. And Kalbyna was beautiful. I could see the wide and white sands; the heat was beating up from them, you know. Behind the sands the palms tossed their feathers against the sky, and under them, to the left, were the houses, palm-thatched, with their coloured wooden walls looking like blobs of bright wet paint in that wonderful Behind the houses and the palms air. were massed the hills—mountain backed by mountain, bright and polished in the light, moving and luminous and magnetic."

He looked at his friend.

"I knew exactly why I had come. The new life was thrust upon me, as it were, but I knew all about the me who stood on Kalbyna's quay. This Oswald Sleath was no stranger, though I had only awakened to him that day. He—I had come to Kalbyna to trade. Oswald—that is I—had been a trader of an unsatisfactory sort before-I knew that quite well—and had not been a Kalbyna had been a gambler's success. chance for him. But once he had set eyes on the island he knew that it was to be his destiny. He awoke to it—I think that was me entering into him. He-I knew that Kalbyna was to be made by Oswald Sleath.

"I walked up from the quay to the leafroofed store, the Kalb men carrying my baggage. A whisky-sodden white man walked with me; he was the trader whose place I was to take. He was going home because he was sick to death of Kalbyna. He hadn't a good word to say about the place or its inhabitants, and he obviously wished to depress me. I wasn't depressed; the more I saw of Kalbyna, the more sure of her I was. Already I could feel her in my bones . . . The fool was certain that I was a blockhead. He was certain I was a young blockhead; that is the worst type of the school. I didn't mind in the least; what he was was written all over his bleary countenance. As a matter of fact, he was the failure, not Kalbyna. He might have done immense things in the island. soil is superbly fruitful, and there are minerals of all kinds in the mountains. But if you look up the book by Pollard, you'll find all the material details there; Pollard got them from me-Oswald Sleath, that is. You'll find, too, in Pollard's book my estimate of the Kalbs, and I proved it a correct one. They are a fine people, hardy, strong, and industrious. Then, they lacked direction; they wasted energy in inter-tribal fighting and inter-island raiding. It only wanted a strong, direct mind to control them, and they would yield magnificent results. I saw that at once. I remember thinking the whole thing out in my hammock under the mosquito nets just before I slept. I slept, and awoke Bernard Anstey, in London—and London and Bernard Anstey seemed singularly squalid and colourless."

Anstey stopped; he thought for a space, probably recalling that wonderful first

impression.

"I spent a curious day—I mean my waking day," he continued. "I hadn't quite grasped what it all meant. It seemed to me a singular and vivid dream — a curiously actual dream that got between me and my intentions all that day. But here, awake in London, I hadn't quite grasped exactly what it signified. It spoilt that day, however. I had set down a precise timesheet-writing in the morning, then lunch with a man I wished to impress, a committee meeting in the afternoon, and in the evening a party meeting at Croydon, at which I might be called upon to speak. Well, I didn't write; I kept the luncheon appointment, and didn't talk. The big man provided several openings, and I quite saw that he expected me to rise to the occasion, but my brain just wasn't there at all. I could not talk. I take it that he was disappointed in me—I knew he must be. I felt it keenly during the day, then I forgot all about the matter. The committee meeting I cut altogether. I went to the Museum Reading Room and submerged myself in the East Indies. The meeting at Croydon-I didn't even think of it. I wanted to go home and go to bed, and I did-and I awoke in Kalbyna.

"Well, I needn't go into details. After the first few nights I stopped trying to puzzle things out, and simply accepted the facts. I knew that directly I went to sleep in London I awoke in Kalbyna, and that I had work to do in Kalbyna. That was all that mattered. You remember you fellows used to think I had peculiar capacities for administration, organisation, government, and the like? I thought so, too, and had prepared to assault England with those gifts." Anstey laughed. "The ideas of youth are a little exaggerated, eh? But my ideas weren't exaggerated for Kalbyna; the

gifts I had were the gifts she needed, and I

applied them."

"But did you give in without a fight?" cried Lowndes. "I mean, it was all very well to dream-all right, then, to live this fine dream life, but to live it must have—in fact, did mean that all your ambitions here, in London, were to end. Did you give up

all your plans without a struggle?"

"I don't think I had the chance to struggle, not powerfully, in any case — the dream life was so absorbing. At once it had become a passion, and in the face of that passion the real life—I suppose it was my real life—became more dream-like. I treated London as an unreality. I let everything slide, didn't bother. That's how I became a clerk in the insurance company. Money affairs became, mildly, a nuisance. banker returned a cheque 'overdrawn.' realised that, as a poor man, I would have to keep my London self solvent and alive. I looked for work. The first job I found was in a stockbroker's office. It was much too strenuous—it interfered with Kalbyna. gave it up, and was accepted by the Ruby Insurance Company—mild, dream-like work, admirably useful to me. I have been there ever since.

"Of course the contrasts were queer. You see, I was able very quickly to become important in Kalbyna. I became in time a sort of European adviser to the Ranj, and then I became a sort of general also. Can you see the contrast? Somewhere about four p.m. Bernard Anstey would be taken to task for sending Mr. Smith, of The Acacias, Stamford Brook, a fire, burglary, and housebreaking renewal notice instead of a fire and burglary renewal notice; at two a.m. (London time) the same person, under the name of Oswald Sleath, would be in the Court of Kings and outwitting the cruel but suave diplomacy of enemy Ranjs; and a word from him might launch armies and waste villages.

"I remember going to a matinee of a rather full-blooded play one year. People didn't go much to that play because they said it was too real and ugly and primitive. I found it comical and unnatural. At that time I was marching through the dense bush, at the head of a very respectable force of Kalbs, against a tribe of petty pirates who had been causing trouble. Perhaps you've never been on a bush campaign, Austin. No. One follows imperceptible tracks, the army in single file. The green-black gloom presses down upon one's shoulders. The

silence is appalling—an immense quiet that towers over one. Yet the silence is full of creeping stealth. The green walls at one's elbows, the dripping lianas, and the horribly tangled underbush are full of movement. Death is poised in that green quiet. From the flash of an arrow, fish-bone tipped and poisoned, to the whirr of a flying ant whose bite is fever, there are a score of secret deaths in wait. And then the sweat and the stinks, the quiet and the sudden tumult of the quick-born fight, the spreading of the Kalbs through the trees, the crash of the undergrowth, the throbbing drummings as the hand-drums beat to war, the heavy, hard shocks of firing away amid the inscrutable greenery; then the rush into the clearing, and men going down, and the women screaming and the head-hunters getting busy -a fitful sleep in the midst of battle, and here I was in London, with my fellow-clerks telling me I was a dry old stick without an ounce of romance in me.... Who was it? Blenchem—joined the Territorials. He tried hard to explain to me what soldiering meant, but he gave it up. I couldn't understand— I! The night before he spoke I had beaten in pitched battle the most redoubtable chief in the island, and had spent all my will successfully—in persuading and forbidding my blood-drunk Kalbs from putting the whole of the enemy at once to death by slow and ingenious torture.

"But you will find all that in Pollard's book. Pollard tells the story of the whole of my fighting and the work I did. The work I did was good, Austin. I was making Kalbyna—I made it; the Kalbs are good material. I taught them the value of industry and the waste of raiding and piracy. I straightened out their lives. I broke all their enemies and gave them the chance of realising themselves in peace. All this made me, of course. In time I became the man that counted there—the biggest man, apart from the Ranj, but he didn't count. He was a weak creature, soft with drink. I was the real force, the real drive-I was

Kalbyna.

"And by the time that Kalbyna was worth while it was something in the world; its trade was big, its standing was notable in the East—my work was good to look upon."

"Yet you never used to look upon it?" said Lowndes. "That's the queer point, Bernard. You remained here, in London, an obscurity - you never went out to Kalbyna."

"No, for several reasons. One was that

I couldn't afford it, another was my dread of spoiling things—of losing Kalbyna. What would have happened if I had set sail for the island, if I had reached it? Could Bernard Anstey and Oswald Sleath fuse in the same way? Or would the spell be shattered and—— No, no, Austin, I dared not risk that. As things were I had to accept them

-I must go on as I was.

"In time the Ranj died. I think they killed him—bamboo splinters in his food, you know, the usual method of removal in those parts. Their idea was that the Ranj's son, a strong, passionate, evil little cur, would become ruler, and I would be kicked out. If he had ever ruled, I should have been kicked out—that was the extent of his regard for me—but I was too strong for them. Before Kalbyna knew the Ranj was deadbut I knew it—I had the son out of the island—an easy but decisive bit of Machiavellism, but it worked. His life was too unclean, and he saw the wisdom of going before European justice separated him from his life as well as his kingdom. Gabo allowed some personal details of his unlovely career to leak out, and his people became full of hatred for him. It was only after this that I let the Ranj die—publicly.

"And I became Ranj. I didn't want to become Ranj—not particularly, anyhow—but there was nobody else. The people wanted me to be Ranj, and I knew it was to the benefit of the people. I was right on top of my power, and with all the best of my work to come. It was not a moment when I could afford to run risks, so I became Ranj...I remember just about that time they gave me a rise of two-and-six a week at the Ruby Insurance and promoted my junior over my head—the two-and-six was to soften the blow my incompetence had brought

to me.

"My becoming Ranj was an excellent thing for Kalbyna—you will see why in Pollard—but of course from that moment onward I was Their decisive enemy. There could be nothing for it but war to the death."

Lowndes interrupted.

"Who are They?" he asked.

"A bush society—a secret society. You know these native secret societies are all over Africa, and they are in Kalbyna, too. Religion is in it—a beastly sort of religion, blood sacrifices and other abominations. In the old days they—they call themselves the Brotherhood of Skulls; we're head-hunters in Kalbyna, or, rather, we were—had a

most sinister power. They terrorised the superstitious people, just worked their will through threat of witchcraft, witch-doctory, and the like. If a man crossed them, he knew his life was forfeited; they'd denounce him as the cause of tribal misfortune, and he'd go to the stake. I've been out against them from the first. Under the old Ranj I weakened them. Under my own rule I did my best to stamp them out. But we can't stamp out religions. The process of stamping may make the bulk smaller, but the remnants actually become stronger, more determined, more fanatical. Religions cannot be killed; they must decline and expire. That might happen in Kalbyna, because the people have learned the folly of the old bloodthirsty cult. But it hasn't quite happened. Fanatics yet remain. In the blackness of the bush black rites go on secretly. Latterly, even, They have become bolder—bolder, yes, and stronger."

"How is that?"

"The dissatisfied have gone over to them. In progress there is always reaction. There are always elements who are the enemies of advance—the baser and the indolent, who see themselves threatened by a common honesty and a common industry; the conservative, who hate change; the superstitious, who consider a new order irreligious; and there are those, mainly of evil trade, whom progress will ruin. The latter especially have added a new and wicked vigour to the Brotherhood of Skulls."

"But how?" asked Lowndes. "That the lazy and the orthodox might be hostile, I can understand; but who can be ruined

by progress?"

"The opium sellers," said Anstey. "When I—when Oswald Sleath first went to Kalbyna, there was opium—everywhere. Opium has been forbidden. There is still a secret trade, but it is vanishing fast."

"I see. And the opium sellers, to save themselves, have entered into an alliance

with the Brotherhood of Skulls?"

"That is it. They ranged themselves in a solid coalition against me. I was to feel the weight of their power. I was to be won over—by threat—or removed."

"Ah! And you were not won over?"

"Two sly and subtle Kalb grandees interviewed me. They were ineffably bland and innocent, but in their elusive way I was able to see that I had the choice of two evils. Frankly, I was to undo all that I had done in Kalbyna, or die!"

" And—\_"



"'Somewhere about four p.m. Bernard Anstey would be taken to task for sending Mr. Smith, of The Acacias. Stamford Brook, a fire, burglary, and housebreaking renewal notice instead of a fire and burglary renewal notice :...

"And I am afraid I was a trifle too blunt. I told them brutally I knew exactly what was in their minds, and that I would have no truck with them. This happened yesterday—last night. Some time this week they'll strike. How, I don't know—a poisoned kris flung in the dusk, bamboo splinters in my food, or—I don't know. But it'll come certainly. I wanted to explain it all to you, but I'm afraid it's too late. It's nine-thirty."

"I know," said Lowndes, "but I must hear more. Surely—"

"There's a lot to do in Kalbyna," said

Anstey—"an awful lot to do, and they may strike any moment. No, it's nine-thirty. You must go, Austin."

"But they might———— I mean, I only half know," began Lowndes, but Anstey was already crowding him towards the door.

"You will find all the facts in my papers," said Anstey. "That is why I have told you, to prepare you. It's all there. Now you must go, my dear fellow. I must sleep. There is such a lot to do in Kalbyna—"

"But can't I help? Well, can I come

to-morrow?"

"Yes, come to - morrow. Yes, come



at two a.m. (London time) the same person, under the name of Oswald Sleath, would be in the Court of Kings and outwitting the cruel but suave diplomacy of enemy Ranjs; and a word from him might launch armies."

to-morrow. Good-bye. No, you can't help. Good-bye."

"It's horrible!" protested Lowndes.

"Inevitable only. Good night, old fellow."

Lowndes was turned out. He left with his head in a whirl. It was all incredible, but when Anstey spoke one had to believe. It was all strangely unreal, fantastic, yet it was so true in texture. One man with two personalities—Bernard Anstey, of London, sharing one mind and soul with Oswald Sleath, of the East Indies—absurd, impossible, an insane idea even, but he had heard Anstey state it as a fact, and Anstey had spoken in tones of rock-like veracity.

And if it was true, then, good Heavens, it was hideous. It meant death. Sleath was

doomed to die; that meant Anstey must die. All the way home, all through the night, Lowndes turned over in his mind the amazing, the impossible problem. It was inconceivable, this double life and double death, yet he could not convince himself it was untrue. He argued it all out during the night. He rose in the cold sensibility of dawn, and, with practicality of morning and the chilly sanity of his tub, he scoffed.

"It's all absurd," he declared finally-"the maddest of dreams or series of dreams. It's unreal and it's impossible; and I'll go round at once and talk sense to Bernard. Immediately after breakfast I'll go round

and knock sanity into him." But he didn't even breakfast.

He was on his first cup of coffee when he came upon that paragraph about Oswald Sleath.

Oswald Sleath, the King of Kalbyna, had died suddenly in Kalbyna yesterday—that is, during the night. A three-line cable reported the fact.

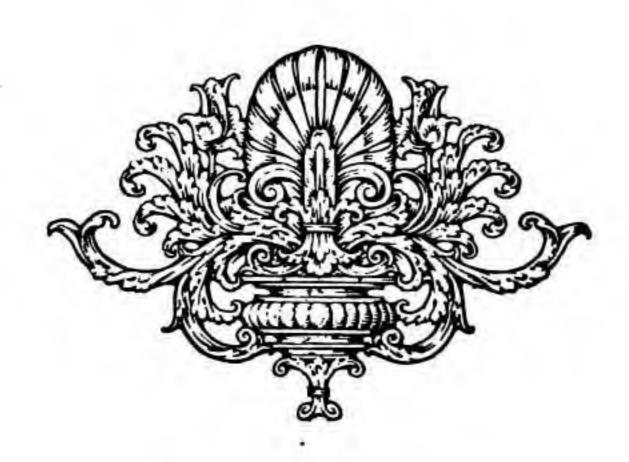
In an agony of fear Lowndes taxied to Westminster. He met a doctor on the step.

Bernard Austey had died suddenly during

the night.

"A very queer case," said the doctor-"sudden and violent stomach and bowel Snuffed him out with awful trouble. abruptness. Most queer case . . .

Lowndes thought of bamboo splinters. They had carried out their threat.



### IN NOVEMBER

THE garden fires had all gone out. Mute ghosts of sunflowers stood about, And sodden heart's-ease lingered yet Near spires of rain-drenched mignonette. The washed-out roses, dull and dead, O'erhung the spoiled begonia bed, And not one breath of fragrant myrrh From lad's love nor from lavender.

But in the dusky corner there A violet peeped, and unaware The garden seemed a heavenly place, Lit by the wonder of her face.

FAY INCHFAWN.

# CECILIA'S GHOST

## By DESMOND COKE

#### ILLUSTRATED BY G. WELCH RIDOUT

ECILIA suddenly decided that, in spite of her name, she must write

something horrible.

Of course, like every respectable unmarried girl, she had published a novel, but there was nothing very awful about that, in spite of what the critics said. It was domestic; and deep in her, Cecilia felt sure, there was something unsuspected—almost unwomanly, dark, eerie—something that could find relief only on paper.

She would surprise the people who looked upon her as a rather average woman, and upon Woman as a very ordinary thing. She would raise the lid of her soul and display to them for one second things that would send them shuddering away. Never again should anybody call her "Sis."

It was not of moral iniquity that she hankered to write. No, it was dank horror which appealed to her. She would prove that she was a woman in no earthy mould, a woman all apart. Those who had been her friends should shiver as they passed, and murmur to inquisitive companions: "Why, she wrote 'The Crawling Thing'! . . . Let's hurry on, or she will talk to us, and I dread meeting her weird eyes."

There! "The Crawling Thing." That was the very title she had sought so long, and now it had come to her without any effort! The gods—but no, the demons—obviously spurred her on. She hurriedly seized up a pen and wrote these three words

in excited capitals:

#### "THE CRAWLING THING."

Then she began to think; and possibly that hurt the demons' pride, for, try as she

might, nothing more would come.

A dozen times did she write the first sentence, a dozen times she crossed it out. Nothing seemed quite ghastly enough to go beneath so grim a title. "It was midnight" appeared to her the best, but she felt certain that she had read it somewhere before. All the best things, she finally decided, had been used up centuries ago.

It was certainly very unfair that the early authors had started with such an advantage. Anybody could have been original in those days, when nobody had written anything. What a classic she would have become if only she had been born in the sixteenth century—or even before Edgar Allan Poe!

The sense of injustice was fatal to creation.

She laid down her pen.

Then she thought of something else.

As it was something that she had done five hundred times at least before, it is surprising that she did not think of it a little earlier.

She would ask Max.

#### II.

"Max," she said, as soon as he arrived.

" I've never written a ghost story."

"Why should you?" he answered jauntily, as he laid down his straw hat. It is not in healthy young men to anticipate a crisis.

Cecilia was annoyed at once.

She saw now that this, of course, was just the answer he would make. She had been a fool to ask him. It was this horrible superiority that always made her talk of something else whenever he proposed. Simply because he had sold twenty thousand copies of a book admittedly not half so good as hers was going to be, and had two serials almost accepted!

"I'm sure I don't know why I shouldn't."

she replied with warmth.

Max pulled his trousers up two inches at the knee and sank into an easy-chair before he nonchalantly answered.

"Simply," he said, "because no woman ever has." He ran a finger down the mauve

clock of his socks.

C'ecilia could not trust herself to speak at first. This 1880 tone of patronage to Woman—and from the man who wished to marry her! She sat and stared at him and thought. Her first instinct was to overwhelm him with the names of all the women who had written about ghosts; but that seemed petty, and she could not recall

any at the moment, so she took a higher

"When you scoff at women like that," she said coldly, "do you recollect that Grace Darling, George Eliot, Mrs. Pankhurst and Christabel; that Joan of Arc, the late Mrs. Gladstone, and Elinor Glyn; that your own mother——"

"Leave her out," Max interrupted. "She's never written one. I never heard that any

of the others bad?"

"Oh!" cried Cecilia, with a pretty gesture of disdain. "And yet they say women can't argue! Of course you knew I wasn't talking about ghost stories just then."

Max gave no answer—probably guilt weighed him down—and presently, speaking in the tones that adults use to a forgiven child, Cecilia asked again calmly: "What do you think there is against my writing a

ghost story ? "

His penitence was certainly delusive. " Nothing but the fact already mentionedwomen simply can't." And whilst she gaped at him, he crossed his legs comfortably, joined finger-tips, then started with the air of an Extension lecturer. "Women, you will find, are straitly limited to a quite narrow sort of writing. Essays, garden books, diaries, War experiences, domestic or sex novels-that is Woman's realm, and for an obvious reason. They have not been educated. Not," he added hastily, "in Greek or Latin, with this result: they lack the classic sense of form - that splendid simplicity which drives through from line one on to Finis, leaving out A woman's mind is the inessentials. different. What does she do if she sits down to write? She just starts anyhow, and sees what happens."

"When I sit down to write," Cecilia said

with dignity, "I sit down and write."

"An excellent idea," Max answered suavely, "but it won't do with ghosts. You must sit down and think. Days must pass before you touch a pen. And why? Because, unless each step is logical, the whole thing goes to pot. And that is why no woman ever has written, or will, a really good ghost story."

Cecilia suddenly got up. He also rose,

but she was at the door by then.

"Good-bye," she said, turning there.
"I'm afraid I can't give you tea. Will you let yourself out! I'm in the mood to work, and everything must yield to that. I've quite decided to write a ghost story."

#### III.

Max, for a man, was tactful.

He never said a word about the tale. He did not ask how it was getting on. He waited.

And presently came his reward.

"Max," asked Cecilia thoughtfully, some four days later, when he had paid his daily call, "how is the best way to begin ghost stories?" She spoke in quite an abstract manner.

"Well," he replied, no less impersonal, without a reference to any quarrel, "there are a dozen ways. Some begin at the last chapter. Many don't begin at all," he added

hopefully.

"I could go on," she said, with a certain pathos. "I'm full of ghosts and things, all waiting to come out on paper, but it is just beginning. Max," she cried, and he had never seen her so appealing, so fragile, so delightful, "won't you write me just Chapter One, and tell nobody, and then I can go on?"

He got up and stood over her. "Wouldn't I do anything in all the world for you?" he asked. And then he ventured, ever so timidly: "Sis!" It sounded much more

daring than "Cecilia."

She writhed. "I only want one chapter," she said lightly, to hide her emotion. "Just to get me going. When can you deliver it?"

"What is the rate of remuneration?"

he inquired.

"Oh, don't be tiresome, Max!" was her

peevish retort.

He could not have believed that what had seemed life's golden moment could turn so rapidly to dross.

#### IV.

Max cleared his throat and said impos-

## "THE CRAWLING THING. FIRST CHAPTER."

"Oh, I think 'First Chapter' sounds horrid!" remarked Cecilia critically. "I like to hear it called 'Chap. One.'"

Max was firm at the start. "Of course," he said, "this is a mere shell. You can do what you like with it. This gets the creeps started. That and the title will be quite enough. The whole thing is a formula. By the way, I'm calling myself May."

"But why?" Cecilia asked.

Max snorted. "It's no use asking why. I am. I've got to be somebody, and stories like this are always in the first person. and I must be a girl."

"Oh, yes," said Cecilia. "Well, go on."
"First Chapter," doggedly repeated Max,
and then—

" THE HOUSE ON THE HILL.

"Wanted, young couple to rent half of a large old country house (furnished).—Apply,

Rus, Box 116a. . . . "

Cecilia gave a little sigh. "Oh!" she said.

"And I wanted it to start with something creepy! I could have written an advertisement myself."

"It is creepy," sternly answered Max.

"The readers all know something terrible is due to happen, directly they read this. That is the way every mystery story ever

written has begun."

"Couldn't it be midnight, Max?" Cecilia murmured in the tones that had so often

brought victory before.

But this time Max was adamant. "No, it could not," he said. "They wouldn't read advertisements at midnight. It's not ever done. And I shan't read the thing at all unless you promise not to say a word."

"I may at the end?" she asked.

"Yes, at the end," he answered with

emphasis.

Thus crushed, Cecilia nestled in the sofa cushions and elaborately laid a finger on her laughing lips. Max ignored this little pantomime, and, having read the disputed advertisement again, went on—

"I repeated the words to myself for the five hundredth time, with ever-growing sense

of dread.

"Yesterday they had seemed full of promise. I had pictured my brother, once dragged away from his beloved London, rapidly becoming the merry-hearted boy who had been my child-playmate, instead of the silent, gloomy man, obsessed by his writing, that he had recently become. To-day the same words came back to me with a note of doom, as something threatening to wreck my life.

"I could not say exactly what it was that had produced this change. Perhaps it was the long, slow drive to our new home; perhaps the bitter cold; perhaps my

brother's silence.

"'Denzil,' I almost startled myself by asking suddenly, talking loud to overcome the rattling of our ancient carriage, 'you've never told me anything really about the house. I hope our half is separate?'

"'It's a quaint old rambling place,' he answered, 'built so that our wing only touches the main building at one point. I suppose there'd be a locked door there. In

our garden you won't know there is another house, and naturally we each have our front door.'

" 'And the landlord ? Is he-what is he

like, Denzil?

"'Haslam? Oh, I don't know,' he answered. 'Forty or so, I suppose. Not a bad fellow, I dare say. Didn't altogether like his looks. But I expect he'll leave us decently alone. You'll see.'

"He sank once more to silence, in a way that made it clear he did not want to talk.

"The jolting carriage rattled on, and I

was left no whit more at ease.

"Vague terrors, shapeless premonitions, surged across my mind. In vain I tried to laugh at them, in vain I tried to reason. A hideous fear gripped hold of me. The horse's slow feet seemed to hammer out a song of doom.

"Denzil,' I said almost faintly, 'Denzil,

I'm so cold!'

" He did not answer.

"He was staring past me with his eyes wide open, eyes clearly unseeing, drawn as by a spell.

" 'Denzil, Denzil!' I cried in horror.

"And still he stared coldly, blankly.

through me with fixed eyes.

"The sun, so lately in its bed-time glory, peeping rosily from curtains of a splendid yellow, now flung a last despairing beam on Denzil's clear-cut face, giving to it the deadly colour of a mummy.

"I laid a shaking hand upon his knee.
Don't look like that! I cried. 'You

frighten me.'

"He seemed to come back to himself

with a jar. His eyes shrank suddenly.

patiently. Then, as his eyes seemed to regain their faculty of vision: 'Why, here we are! That's Hagstomb.' He pointed to the spot where his gaze had been held...

"I did not look at once. 'Hagstomb!'
I repeated. 'Hagstomb! Our house isn't

called Hagstomb?

"Yes," he said, with angry cheeriness But I meant not to tell you. You've such odd ideas. Someone was buried there. We easily can alter it. Now have a look at our new home."

"Already sick with an unreasoning fear.

I looked around.

"High on a bleak hill it stood, slate-grey in the sunset's monotone, illimitably drear. The dropping sun pierced for one moment its blackened hangings with a blood-red ray, which caught the windows of the gloomy,

shapeless pile. From pane to pane the flare ran fitfully.

" Looks just as though it was on fire

already!' Denzil laughed.

"But to my eyes it spoke of infernal

revelry and evil chance.

"I placed a hot, trembling hand on Denzil's wrist.

"He turned slow eyes upon me.

"I felt tears trickling down my face.

"'Why, little girl-' he said with

sudden tenderness.

"'Oh, Denzil, I can't—I can't!' I sobbed, and fell shuddering across his knees."

#### V.

" WHY did she do that?" Cecilia asked.

"My dear girl—" he began, and she was too enthralled for protest. "If you ask that, you have spoilt the story. It was the horror of it—don't you see? Of course I don't know—this is all I'm writing"—he spoke firmly "but I imagine it will turn out to have something to do with the Crawling Thing."

"Oh!" cried Cecilia in surprise. "I thought you said that she was cold? I wondered why she didn't put a wrap on."

Max flung the manuscript upon the carpet. He had not troubled much about the chapter, but he thought it deserved better than this. "If she'd done that." he bellowed, "she would have wrecked the chapter and taken all the mystery away. But that's just like a woman. I told you so. You've too much common-sense for ghosts. 'She wouldn't have done that,' you say, and really we all know she wouldn't. But that's no use with a spook story. Well, it's all done," he went on, with relief, "so now we'll just pretend she did put on her wrap, and then we'll burn the rotten chapter."

"Oh, don't be cross and horrible," ('ec'lia said, with a reproachful gentleness. "You've done Chap. One so beautifully. It's only I don't see quite where the Crawling Thing comes in. Max"—and her tones were almost sugary—"if you did just a leetle

more-

"No," answered Max, with just that dubious quaver which would save his manly dignity when he had given in—the quaver invented by Adam when offered the apple, and used by his descendants ever since.

"Oh, yes, Max!" she replied, and took his arm. He quivered with delight. "You do it so well! I should only spoil your chapter. I'll take it up when you've got

in your stride."

"No," came the answer. His arm that

she pressed was all tense and hard.

"I don't believe you can," she whispered. It would have been a hiss if it had held an "s."

Man is so simple always—when he has a woman on his arm. That evening Max worked upon "The Crawling Thing" till midnight.

VI.

Max, with ill-hidden pride, unrolled a solid bundle of MS. and settled down to read. She should see now whether he could!

#### "THE CRAWLING THING.

" SECOND CHAPTER.

#### " I GO ALONG THE CORRIDOR.

"My room that night was full of presences.

"Try as I might to go to sleep, always, as I shut my eyes, I felt—something behind me.

"I lit my candle. I tried to laugh my fears away. A grown woman—afraid of the dark!

" But it was all of no avail.

"Gradually, little by little, a sound from the actual world began to force itself upon me. At first I affected not to hear it; I tried to deceive myself. But it insisted, and slowly I began to analyse it, despite myself.

"What was the sound, and whence? At first it seemed to come from the next room, this regular soughing as of a distant engine, then from my very room, and then, for certain, from without the door. It was in

the passage!

"But what? This question also found its answer slowly; but when the truth came to me, it came, like all awful truths, without debate. There was no doubt. The sound was of deep breathing, so deep as to seem like that of somebody in effort or agony.

"The terror of that discovery I think I shall never forget. For some moments I could scarcely think. Then into my mind, full with the terror of this room, yet faced with that greater dread outside, there came an instinct that is still a puzzle to me.

"I hurried on a dressing-gown, took my candle, and unlocked the door. With strange calmness I turned the light now this way, now that, along the corridor, peering here and there. There was nothing to be seen.

"Then, with no more time for thought, I hastened aimlessly along the dim corridor. shielding the uncertain flame with a protecting hand.

"It came upon me gradually that I was being drawn to a single spot. I walked aimlessly, unguided by my will, moved rather than moving, and yet I knew where I was going. At the end of this wing of the house—for which we had no use—there was a room empty but for half a dozen boxes. I halted suddenly beside the door.

sudden, to avoid them, I turned the handle. It was hideously dark within—so much I could tell as I stood, with the door open but a little, and listened for a sound or any sign of human presence.

Everything was silent, and presently, still haunted by my thoughts, I cried, Is anyone here?' and then started



"It was now, when I ceased to move, and realised how far I had travelled from my room, that fear first came upon me. I began to fancy endless horrors that might front my eyes on entry; I pictured, above all, someone huddled in a corner, with a pistol trained upon the door. So terrifying were my thoughts—and so strong still my impulse to go inside the room—that of a

at the sound of my thin, frightened voice.

"Aghast at my own boldness, I thrust the door still further open and stood on the threshold, gazing in.

"And then I almost laughed at my mad

fears.

" For the room was empty! Our travelling trunks had been set, as I had ordered, on the floor, but so scattered that I could see that nothing lurked behind them; a spring bed, without a mattress, stood along one wall; but for the rest there was nothing!

"Now at last, reassured despite myself. I turned to go. I would deceive myself into the belief that I had fancied everything, that this was just an empty box-room:

above all, I would leave this room.

"Then a thing happened of which even now I cannot bear to think. When I turned round, the door had swung to, not so as to be absolutely closed, but so as to leave a gap of possibly an inch between it and the framework. I laid hold of the handle and, in my longing to escape, gave it a strong

pull towards me.

"The door refused to move! It was not that it had jammed. There was no unyielding fixity about it, but rather a force which, though averagely steady, now gave, now gained a little—brute force resistlessly, unceasingly opposing me. Now the door was open close upon two inches, now it swung back until almost shut. The explanation left no place for doubt.

"The door was being held by somebody

-Something against me!

"At that awful thought a spasmodic shudder passed along my body, and I let go my hold upon the handle. Slowly and noiselessly, as if controlled by some uniform and impassive force, the door was closed, and, urged by an instinct of defence, I turned the key."

"Better a millionfold to be in the room. explored in every corner, than in the passage

with all its unknown horrors!

"But as I stood in trembling near the centre of that empty room, I felt that, turn where I might, there was always—I will not say someone, but some presence behind me.

"In terror, I fell on my knees.

"And at that, from near behind me. came a low, full laugh of pity and derision.

"In an instant my hands fell from my face. I sprang up and stood crect, listening with every nerve.

"Again it came--less loud this time, more as of one who chuckles at the memory

of a glorious jest.

"I forced myself to turn. I moved slowly round, dreading each moment to meet the face of the intruder. But there was no one there.

"Then panic seized me. I tottered, rather than ran, to the wall furthest from the awful

sound, and cowered helplessly against the corner. It was some comfort to feel the

solid brick behind my back.

"Standing thus, I could be certain. The room was absolutely empty. There were still the scattered trunks, still the empty bed, still the depressing wall-paper of slate and blue. What more prosaic room could be imagined? And yet . . .

"Was I mad? Was Denzil right!

"And as I doubted, thoughts flashing at wild speed across my fevered brain, the laugh rang out again, the big laugh of strong Cruelty amused at cringing Terror, such as one would fancy the exultation of a fiend in hell."

Max's voice died down.

"Is that all?" asked Cecilia, uncurling

herself rather timidly.

"All of that chapter," Max answered rather grandly. She had not believed he

could go on !

Cecilia sat silent for a moment. "You never explain," she said presently. "Who held the door? Who laughed? And was it a cat breathing?"

"A cat!" Max answered scornfully.

"Of course it wasn't. Nor, may I add, was

it a mouse."

"Well, what was it, then ?"

He cleared his throat and answered rather pompously: "My dear Cecilia, those things cannot be explained—just yet. That's all left for the last chapter. Nobody must know till then."

Cecilia put on her most pleading air and asked in studiously childish tones:

" Not even me?"

"Why, you're writing it," Max answered coldly.

"So I am," she sighed.

#### VII.

"YES," said Cecilia presently, with quite an air of finality. "But when do you start the love interest?"

He put down the manuscript a little heavily. "The love interest?" he asked in dazed tones, blinking.

" May and Mr. Haslam," she said quite

simply.

"Oh, yes," he replied, with desolating irony, "that will be Chap. IV. Then in Chap. V. we'll please women readers by making Denzil fall in love with a house-keeper dressed all in black. And before the end we'll find a lover for the Crawling Thing."

"Oh, that'll be splendid!" cried this

innocent Cecilia, clapping her hands girlishly. "I was afraid that you were going to be stuffy. But need the housekeeper be all in black? She might be wearing--"

"I think," said Max, in iron tones of selfrestraint, "I'd better leave all the love interest part for you! You'll do it ever so much better. I'm not a success ever as a lover." He looked up, but she had looked down. "Besides, I think it'll spoil the story. It's just what I said women always did. But of course you'll know what the housekeeper has got to wear."

#### VIII.

"WELL, look here," said Max, as though to end an argument that had been over-long, "I really can't go on. I've done three chapters now, and I meant only to do one. I've got it started now, and everybody knows how it goes on. But, if you like, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make a list of "Oh, yes!" cried Cecilia. "Bring it

round after tea?"

Max began to look on the ghost story with more favour. Cecilia usually would not let him call more than once every day, which he considered a niggardly ration for these times of Peace. Punctually at quarter to five he came into her little drawingroom.

" Have you got it ? " she asked keenly.

He at once unrolled it. These things are hest over. Once he had read the list, they could resume their nice old talks, such as they had before she got this preposterous idea.

" Listen," he said.

"Chapter III. -- What Lay Beneath the Sheet.

IV. - I Make a Discovery. Chapter V. The Tomb Beneath Chapter

the Yews.

Chapter VI. - Denzil Beards the Landlord.

Chapter VII. - A Woman in Black. Chapter VIII. - The Face at the Window.

Chapter IX. -- In the Empty Room. X. -- A Night of Terror. Chapter

Chapter XI. - Old Toby Talks. Chapter XII. - We Drive Out."

"Splendid!" she exclaimed, to his relief. "So now I can get on. Only "-and then she hesitated-"I don't think I quite see Chap. IV. What did lay -no, lie beneath the sheet?"

Max laughed. "Ask me another! I was

never any good at riddles."

"You mean to tell me," she said angrily, "you put it down there and don't know yourself? I call that really mean."

"But I do know," Max protested. Without care, he could see his pleasant afternoon all

spoilt.

"Then what did?" she asked like a child.

" I don't believe you know."

He had his head against a wall. "I'll write Chap. IV., then," he said hurriedly.

"Max, you dear!" she exclaimed. It

was the first time ever.

Max certainly believed in ghosts.

#### IX.

"AND this really is the last," said Max firmly, whereon he began to read :

"CHAPTER THE THIRD

er - Chap. Three.

" WHAT LAY BENEATH THE SHEET.

"What was that !

" I woke up with the distinct impression of someone fumbling at the door. A tap the handle turned.

" I sat in terror, staring out.

" 'May ? ' whispered a voice, and I could almost have laughed in my relief.

" It was Denzil!

"I leapt from my bed and in mad haste turned the key. It was wonderful to have company, to feel someone near during the

long night hours in this awful house.

"But Denzil came in strangely grave and white. 'I say, old girl,' he whispered, 'I came to tell you that there is someone in the house. I heard footsteps, real footsteps -he smiled at me- in the corridor. I came to warn you not to be frightened if you heard me running about.' I noticed for the first time that he held a revolver in his hand. I had never known that he possessed it. He gently took my arms from around him, and made as if to go towards the door. The motion filled me with a fresh alarm.

" 'You won't leave me ? 'I asked. 'You

won't go ?

"'Don't be afraid!' was his answer. ' Nothing will happen to you, old girl. Lock the door till I come back.

" 'But, Denzil . . .' I put my arms around him, as if to keep him, but he shook himself

free.

"'You don't suppose, May,' he said, more in his usual manner, 'that we can lock ourselves up while burglars ransack Hagstomb!

"' They're not burglars,' I said in a low voice.

"'Then what are they?' asked Denzil fiercely, and to that I had no answer. As I stood for a moment wondering, I saw him, as in a dream, move from me, go out, and close the door. No notion of stopping him occurred to me. I stood pensive, motionless, for, I suppose, some thirty seconds. Then I realised suddenly that he had gone, to leave me in darkness once again. I flung open the door and gazed along the corridor. Everything was dark and silent. Here and there a thin streak of moonlight filtered obliquely through the narrow windows, and in the gloom I thought I could see cloaked figures lurking, creeping softly nearer. With a shudder, I hurried back into my room and quickly turned the key. I stood trembling with cold and fear, clad only in my nightdress, my hand upon the key, listening for sounds of Denzil.

And as I stood there, I felt from behind me that same feeling—which I have tried to describe—of some presence in the room. I longed to turn, and yet I feared to turn.

I feared everything.

"I must find Denzil. Forgetting all else, intent only on that, I passed swiftly out into the passage. There was no sound anywhere. I walked a few paces with caution-for it was darker here-and then I halted.

" Denzil! I cried. The echoes died away, leaving me startled at the hollow sound that came from my dry throat.

" And now I hesitated which way I should So far as common-sense decided, there could be but little doubt. Denzil, having found nobody in our corridor, would either go down to the day-rooms or up into the servants' attic; he would not expect to find burglars in the empty rooms. All that occurred to me. I knew that it was useless for me to go along the box-room passage, and yet I went-went to the scene of my horror on that hideous night when I had heard the laugh inside the empty room! . . . A few seconds more, and I stood grasping the door-handle of that room. Even then the dread of the place could not avail against its fascination. I listened, but there was no sound inside the room. The moon struck full on this side of the house, and through the half-open door I could see, from where I stood, the wall suffused with a dim glow of light. Everything seemed silent, everything peaceful. And yet I feared to enter. Presently, struck with a thought, I tiptoed lightly to the threshold and peered timidly through the crack between the massive hinges of the door. There, too, was nothing, and again I saw only the pale light glinting on the walls. But even as I assured myself of this, I seemed to feel someone behind me, and swung quickly round, my heart thumping in my body. And again there was nobody, nothing! I resolved to stay thus, a prey to my imaginings, no longer—I would enter.

'At that I flung the door wide open, and then leapt back, finding it comfortable to have the wall behind me. But again no sound came from within, and through the wider opening I could see almost half the room. There were the empty boxes, now piled against a corner, and there was

the empty—

"But, as I looked again, I realised that there was something on the bed-the bed that had been empty. Nothing of oursand yet what could it be? Should I find here, in this bundle covered by a sheet, the secret of the midnight wanderings in Hagstomb? Oh, how I longed for Denzil! I feared to lift the sheet. I made a step towards it, but then drew back, overcome by a strange sickness. I would fetch Denzil!

"Yet, when I had my hand upon the door, I turned, as though my eyes were drawn, and looked long at the shapeless heap that rose upon the bed. It was so still, so simple—a mere sheet that coveredwhat? Why should I not look and know? stepped forward slowly, hesitating, curiosity battling with fear, attraction with repugnance. Only when I was within a foot of the bedside did I start back, as if by instinct. Then, fearing that panic would once more drive me back, I laid hold of the covering and drew it sharply off. Of what met my eyes I can even now scarce hear to write.

"Terribly cramped in his position, pale in the moonlight, a strange man was staring

up at me !

"Thoughts dashed across my mind. Why had I not known? A trap, this formless mass beneath the sheet, to draw me near my murderer, that he might leap upon

me! Instinctively I started back.

"Then the absence of what I feared brought a worse terror to me. I stared. my blood chilling, at his mouth—his mouth fixed in a drawn smile, half jeer, half agony. Why did he not move? Why stare up at me with those cold eyes ?

"My gaze fixed upon them, I seemed to feel myself led, as by an unseen cord, until, craning forward, moving step by step in dread, I found my face within an inch of his. Now I could have no doubt.

" The man was dead!

"Suddenly my strange state broke. I found myself staring into, all but touching, the fixed eyes of the dead man. It was the first time that I had looked on death, and the sight was terrible beyond description. All the blood in my veins rushed up to my head, a lump rose in my throat, a dizzy tingling passed along my limbs.

"I groped blindly for support, and my hand found rest on something strangely stiff and chill. For one moment it steadied me, then I felt my prop yielding, and as I realised that I had grasped the dead's man's hand, I saw his grey-white face lurch

tremulously forward at me.

"There was a burst of sound, the whole wall, bed, face, everything shot up, and the last that I remember is my own shriek echoing in my ears."

#### X.

"So now," Max cried triumphantly, "you

can go on ! "

Cecilia snorted. "I don't see that at all. I think Chap. II. would have been easier to follow up. Real ghosts never die. What can I do now?"

"Do?" Max repeated. "Why, what's always done—go on piling horrors up, and then explain. You said that you were full of shiverdom and ghostery! Well, then, here's your chance. Could you have a better?"

Cecilia suddenly began to weep—the sort of discreet, decorative tears a woman weeps when she is comfortably in sight of the man who loves her.

Instantly Max was by her side, longing

to put arms of consolation round her.

"Why, what's up?" he asked, instead. His hands hung limply by his side. He looked as big an ass as any man looks on a like occasion.

"I believe you've made it hard on purpose," sobbed Cecilia, wounded in her pride. And then, as always, the real complaint came out: "I don't see how you can 'explain' a corpse!"

"Is there any need?" he asked gravely.
"Let's see if we can't find some other end

for it."

Something in his manner-like that with which the mother tries to hearten a child

crying about nothing-shamed her. She dabbed her eyes with a small handkerchief.

"I'm sorry," she said. "Don't think me a fool, Max. I'm never like this. I'm not sure—perhaps writing this awful story has

upset my nerves."

He was still serious. "Need you finish it?" he asked. And then, with just a flicker of his mouth: "Why not stop writing and be just a woman? It's a mistake for both husband and wife to write."

She gaped at him. "Husband and wife?" "Why not?" he asked. "You and me!"

Then she smiled, and it was like the sunshine after a spring shower. "Max;" she said, "how silly you are! Haven't I said fifty times that I don't mean to marry you? I am an artist, not a woman. Besides, we're ever too much splendid pals. I'm far too fond of you, and I don't mean to spoil it."

"What do you mean to do, then?" asked Max casually, as though all this was mere nothing to him. "About this corpse, that is, and the laugh, and what held the

door ? "

She looked grave. She thought. He simply dared not interrupt, and presently her face lit up.

"Max," she said, like one inspired. "could we simply say no more about all that,

and end with a marriage?"

"Exactly what I just proposed!" he cried. And then, in the excitement of the moment, he took her in his arms and kissed her.

He never knew how he had dared to do it, and she was always quite uncertain why she laughed so happily and felt, after long

wandering, at home.

"I think," she murmured, as if in selfexcuse, "perhaps I am a woman, after all, and I've been less fond of you since we began 'The Crawling Thing.'"

When Max got back to his flat, the first thing that he did was to unroll his own manuscript and kiss it sentimentally with something very near to passion.

Then a happy thought occurred to him.

He would please her by finishing the yarn.

He would explain everything—even the dead
ghost. He felt omnipotent, enormous.

Poor little girl, she'd never write a word

of it. She couldn't finish it, he knew.

But when he flattened out the page, he found that, unseen by him, she had, after all.

She had written in decisively large letters, beyond all hope of contradiction—

FINIS.

## TO-MORROW

### By LLOYD WILLIAMS

#### ILLUSTRATED BY W. R. S. STOTT

HE woke with a start as a church clock sounded midnight.

To-morrow had come!

For the first time in his life he had a feeling of fear straining at him; it was more than fear—it was a shrinking from something known, yet outside the range of human experience.

Since the world began, had such a thing

happened before?

He had already lived to-morrow in his

sleep.

He had lived each hour of the day with the precision of actuality. And while he dreamed, he knew it was to-morrow. Everything that was going to happen—except only one thing—was already known to him.

He stared about in the darkness of his room as if measuring himself against the unknown power that had torn down the veil that hangs between now and presently. Was he quite sane? Was he quite awake?

He switched on the light, looking round at well - known, commonplace objects curiously— the bookshelves, wardrobe, chest of drawers, the golf clubs in the corner, portraits on the mantelshelf, his one or two prints, his clothes tossed down carelessly on a chair, a copy of "Marcus Aurelius" on a table by the bed. Everything was absurdly commonplace. door leading into the adjoining room, which was bath and dressing-room combined, stood ajar. He slipped out of bed, switched on the light there, too, and looked about him. He wished to assure himself that everything was normal.

"Am I normal?"

That was the question.

The feeling of fear had passed. Whatever to-morrow brought forth, he must face it. But he was standing on the edge of things, between present and future, and he knew both.

If he were to wake up old Petty, who waited on him, and say to him, "Petty, I have dreamed of everything that is going to happen to-morrow," Petty would

regard him as a lunatic. "Would Petty be right?" he asked himself. "Let us look at the thing squarely and sort out the facts."

He lighted a cigarette and propped himself up in bed comfortably. First he looked back over the past day or two, and the time

just before going to bed.

He had been a trifle overworked, but there was nothing unusual in that. When a man is on the point of getting married, he presses fortune eagerly; but he was fit and strong, and not at all likely to break down. Last night he had read up one or two law points until about half-past nine; then, after a stroll round the Temple, he went to bed with a copy of "Marcus Aurelius" because secretly he thought him the greatest bore that ever lived, and felt sure of falling asleep at once.

A glance over all that was enough. Then he turned his eyes to to-morrow.

The church clock struck again; it was one in the morning now. For practical purposes the day would not begin for another six hours, yet he had already lived most of it, and he recalled his dream.

Petty came into the room and turned on the bath water. "A pleasant morning, sir, but I believe we are going to have rain."

Commonplace words enough, and it remained to be seen if, when seven o'clock came, Petty would use that precise form. He remembered taking his bath and shaving; he gave himself a slight cut on the chin. Then he went down to breakfast, and found three letters awaiting him. He remembered glancing at the address of the top one. Someone had misspelt his name, calling him "Basil Charters," instead of "Basil Charteris."

That envelope contained nothing of consequence. He could not remember what it was—probably a circular. The second letter was from an old friend. Purvis was running in to see him that morning. "I want you to do me a favour."

The third letter came from a man making an appointment for golf. The appointment was registered in his mind-Saturday, at

three, on Banstead Downs.

The day was stretched out before him just as if he had actually lived it instead of merely dreaming it. There was a chaffing dialogue with old Petty, who never under-

stood jokes. Then he-

No, steady! Here was a gap. For the next hour he could not fill in what had happened. He had dreamed it accurately, but it had escaped his memory. For some time he fidgeted over it, trying to recall what it was that happened between nine and ten.

At ten Purvis rushed in. His wife had been taken ill, and he wanted Charteris to take over a case he was engaged in that

day.

It was a straightforward case, and Charteris could do it "on his head." No, he wouldn't take any denial. Here was the brief. "The affair won't last half an hour, so you'll pick up ten guineas easily," said Purvis.

He disliked this practice of taking briefs without due time for preparation, but there was no denying Purvis. Besides, the matter was simple, and he seized the details of the

brief clearly.

He hurried away to Epsom, arriving a little late. He remembered apologising to the judge and telling the man opposed to him, in a whisper, to "cut it short," because

it was useless to drag out the case.

Then the unexpected happened. A woman giving evidence blurted out something of which no one had had notice; he found himself embroiled in a dispute with the judge, who wanted to rule it out as irrelevant. The case wore on until late in the afternoon, and he remembered his long cross-examination of a grim-looking individual, who was accounted one of the saints of the town, but was found to be living a double life.

He won his case with difficulty, but he had done more than win a case. He had made a name. When he got back to London, the papers were already dealing with it. They called it "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in Epsom." How he laughed! A side-wind, a mere fluke, had done what years of hard work had missed. Henceforth he was a

well-known man.

Scarcely had he reached his chambers, when Elsie rushed in. She had read about his triumph, and came with hands outstretched and kisses to congratulate him.

He remembered just how she put it.

"I'm not a bit prouder of you, dear, than I was yesterday, but I'm glad you

have come into your own."

It was such an "occasion" that they felt they must have dinner together, and go to a theatre without troubling to book seats or dress. Elsie chose Wyndham's, and his dream gave him just as clear vision of the play as if he had actually seen it. He could have repeated the story and discussed the acting. He lay in bed puzzling over this for a long time. Perhaps he had read a criticism of the piece when it first came out, and memory was merely playing a trick on him; yet it was amazing how well he remembered it.

And so his dream carried him to the last scene of the day—the scene that was unfinished. His cigarette went out, and he found himself gripping the bedclothes

tightly as he thought of it.

He had seen Elsie home, but refused to go inside for a sandwich and a cigarette, because he must catch a train back to Town. It was on his way to the station that

the unexpected happened.

He became aware that a man was following him. He must have been an absurdly clumsy creature, for he would run a few paces and then stop. On looking round, he saw his pursuer slink into the shadow.

The affair was ridiculous and bordering on cheap melodrama, but it got on his nerves, and at last he stood still and waited.

"Don't hide yourself," he said impatiently. "If you have anything to say,

come and say it."

The man seemed to hesitate, but at last he emerged into a ring of light provided by a lamp. He was shabby and wild-looking, and his movements uncertain and furtive.

"Who the devil are you?" asked

Charteris.

There was no answer except a kind of foolish chuckle.

Charteris began to grow uneasy. A hint of the truth had come to him. This man was a lunatic, and sometimes madmen. . . .

The man came nearer.

"Perhaps you don't know me," he said. Charteris peered at him in the doubtful light, wondering if he were someone he knew; but he was a total stranger.

"Why don't you pretend you never saw

me before?" said the man.

"There's no pretence about it. I haven't seen you before," replied Charteris. "You have mistaken me for someone else."

But he had a notion that the stranger

was not listening; he was in the frame of mind when words make no impression. He was looking behind him with a childishly secretive air, as if to make sure they were alone. He came closer, and Charteris instinctively drew his fist from his pocket to defend himself.

But no defence was possible, for the

attack was too sudden.

"Who wrecked my home?" screamed

the man. " Blast you, I'll . . . .

He had drawn a revolver, and before Charteris could seize him and wrench it away, he fired point-blank at his breast.

know he was dead-killed by a



"Charteris sprang forward, but the other was too quick. The revolver cracked off full in his face, as it seemed, and he fell."

maniac who had obviously mistaken him for another.

He was not afraid to die, but there was something brutally stupid in this. Was he really to be snuffed out by such a disaster?

For some hours he lay awake thinking

over his experience.

What should a man do? Dreams are only dreams, yet there was a kind of he fell asleep, and when he woke, Petty was already in his room

pitiless accuracy about this that dismayed

Suppose, when morning came, the day began to arrange itself just as he had

It was not till nearly four o'clock that

dreamed, would he be a foolish coward if he deliberately avoided the possibility of

Suppose it came true!

that shot ?

"A pleasant morning, sir, but I believe we are going to have rain," said the old man. To-morrow had begun.

П.

CHARTERIS stared at his letters.

The top one was addressed "Basil

Charters," and it contained a circular from a wine merchant with whom he had never dealt. The second was from Purvis, who was calling to ask a favour; the third was a golf appointment.

He laid them by his plate and stared straight in front of him, while Petty hovered about the room fussily. There was something terrifying in this experience, something ina gap. He may have dreamed it, but it would not come back to him. It was a great relief; he could read his newspaper as he walked, without the feeling that he knew already what it contained. What a blessing this was! When people want to know what is going to happen, they little know what a comfort it is to be in ignorance. At half-past nine, as usual, he returned to



"The madman's arm had been struck aside, at the very instant he fired, by Elsie herself."

human. Scores of stories are told of people "foreseeing the future," but it is no more than a glimpse, a peep at one incident. But here was the case of a man seeing almost the whole of a day. Even the chattering commonplaces of Petty were familiar; he had heard them before midnight.

Breakfast over, he took his usual stroll along the Embankment with a pipe. He remembered that this part of the day was

his chambers, and—found Elsie there. This again was totally unexpected, and it was a delightful surprise.

She had arranged to play golf with a girl in North London, and, finding herself with half an hour to spare, had very sensibly called on her young man.

"I suppose you are frightfully busy, Basil, as usual," she said, submitting to a good-morning kiss with a demureness which never failed to charm him. "It will do you good if I waste a little of your time. You work too hard, old boy. Are there any cigarettes?"

He produced a box, and they lighted up. Elsie looked at him curiously. "You look a trifle off colour, dear. Anything

wrong ? "

He told her a portion of his dream, and at first she laughed. Elsie was not in the least fanciful, and looked upon dreams

as "all rot."

"I admit it sounds like foolishness," he said, with a smile. "But the exasperating thing is that up to now everything has come true. The test is, will the rest of the day live up to the dream?"

The letter from Purvis made her frown slightly, and when he went on to say that Purvis was going to ask him to take over a brief in the Epsom Court, she looked at

him hard.

"I can tell you all about the case," he went on. "And, unless the dream lets me down badly, it will prove to be a bit of uck for you and me."

She listened in astonishment.

"If it happens like that, it will be to ping," she said slowly. "You won't be junior long, Basil, if you make a nar But tell me the rest of the day. Wh. happened afterwards?"

"No, I shan't tell you any more. I will write it down on paper and post it to you.

You shall read it to-morrow.'

He was curious to see if the after-part of the day would work out according to programme. It rested with her. She would be almost certain to call upon him on her way home. If she proposed a theatre, they would go to one. If she felt tired and wanted to go home at once, he would go down to Wimbledon with her.

But Elsie was still looking at him. Women are curiously susceptible about unknown influences, and although he smiled and imagined he was concealing his uneasings about the same of it.

ness, she seemed to be aware of it.

"Was there anything unpleasant in the

dream, Basil?" she asked.

"It ended like dreams always do—in a vague something or other that isn't easy to recall," he said carelessly. "Don't let us talk about it any more. I shall——There's a knock at the door, and it will be Purvis come to offer me his brief, Wilkins v. Cheshire."

"Are you sure you haven't already heard of the case?" she asked uneasily.

"Perhaps he has spoken of it, but you have forgotten."

"I haven't seen Purvis for a week or

two. Yes?"

"Mr. Purvis to see you, sir," said Petty. Elsie left him almost at once, and, just as he anticipated, Purvis had come to insist on his taking over a case. His wife was ill.

"It's as plain as a pikestaff, and won't last half an hour," said Purvis. "You'll be

back in Town for luncheon."

Charteris hesitated. He hardly liked to take the brief, because he believed there was more attached to it than Purvis imagined. But when he said as much, and was able to mention the names of the parties without looking at the inscription on the brief, Purvis simply stared at him. Purvis was a downright, matter-of-fact individual, with no more imagination than a sewing-machine.

"Look here, old chap, you don't want to get these cranky ideas in your head," he said. "I'm taking the missus down to Torquay, and the brief is yours. If there's ny fat hanging to it, good luck to you.

t you'll find it all moonshine."

harteris had to leave for Epsom at e, and must trust to reading the case er in the train. By sheer will-power he shut uncanny ideas out of his mind. When he entered the Court late, and apologised to the judge, exactly as he had apologised in his dream, he felt like a puppet being

pulled by invisible strings. Everything that followed was familiar, yet in the press of argument he was able to shut uneasiness out of his mind. The case was commonplace up to a point, and then a woman witness blurted out something that was unexpected. He knew her face, though he had never seen her before; he knew the sound of her voice. An argument with the judge followed, and a dull case became exciting. Wilkins, the plaintiff, was an unsavoury wretch, and Charteris had him back in the witness-box. The man was a humbug of the vilest kind, and at about three o'clock in the afternoon Charteris had won his case after a tough fight.

He had to endure congratulations—which he hardly liked, though he had fairly earned them—and by the time he reached London, the evening papers were chuckling over his retorts and cross-examination. One of them actually had a placard "Dr. Jekyll and

Mr. Hyde in Epsom."

In vain he tried to shake off a feeling of depression; the day was closing down upon him with relentless speed. Another hour or two, and that last s ene would happen. He was already giving way to a feeling of Kismet; it had to happen—there was no escape.

In his chambers he sat for a long time thinking it over. He might avoid it. There were fifty things he might do to escape, but he would go straight on. He would follow his fate, no matter where it led. It rested with Elsie. If she voted for a theatre, to a theatre they would go, and he would take her home as usual.

"If I am to be murdered, I'll take it like a man," he muttered. "I'll be hanged if I save my skin because I got the wind up

over a dream."

Elsie came rushing in exactly as expected, with the evening paper in her hand. It was curious to watch her attitude, and she used the words he expected. "I am not a bit prouder of you, dear, than I was yesterday, but I am glad you have come into your own."

Yet she was uneasy; be could see it in her eyes. The case had taken the turn he had predicted, and, like himself, she shrank from the feeling that they were caught up in a fate that was unavoidable.

"Look here, I won't have any moping over this business," she said. "You shall take me somewhere to dinner, and then we'll do a theatre. I must 'phone to mother, and tell her I'll be home late."

She used his telephone, while he looked over a few letters, but as soon as she had used it, she turned to him with a new alarm in her face.

"Did you expect me to propose a theatre?" she asked.

"I'm not going to He laughed at her. say anything about it. Here is an account of the latter part of my dream, and I am going to post it now. You will receive it in the morning. I shall be ready to start in five minutes, but no more about dreams, Elsie. We will enjoy ourselves. Where would you like to go?"

"What about the Ambassadors?"

"Nothing I should like better," he said.

The dream had broken down, and he was absurdly relieved. But Elsie was looking at him, and, seeing the smile on his face, she may have imagined that she was unconsciously fulfilling his fate, for suddenly she altered her mind.

"I believe I would rather go to Wyndham's," she said.

From that moment his spirits rose. There is tremendous difference between certainty and uncertainty. Hitherto he had been haunted by a doubt as to how far his curious experience was reliable; now he knew the worst. It was correct. Even Elsie's ingenious attempt to ward off Fate was useless, and he could afford to smile. Let a man know the worst, and he can harden himself to face it. There may even be a grim sort of satisfaction in doing so.

Elsie smiled at the relief in his eyes, and doubtless believed she had broken an uncanny spell. They enjoyed themselves finely at dinner, and she discussed sundry

preparations for the wedding.

It was strange how heartily he could enter into it. The feeling that it was not his own wedding was with him, for he would perish that night at the hands of a lunatic, but he would not have spoilt her happiness for the world. Her eyes sparkled and her pretty face flushed with excitement even at the thought of it. He was beginning to take a purely detached view of himself and his own fate. He would put up no end of a fight to save himself presently. He had no intention of being snuffed out by a madman for nothing, but it would be useless. Ingenuity would not serve, and nothing could persuade him to run away from his fate. He would face the business as he had faced things before—in Flanders, for instance.

The evening was a happy one, and neither of them felt the presence of a cloud. During the last interval Elsie said she did not think he need take her down home, " It will do you far more good to get to bed, old boy."

"Just as you like, dear," he said, with a smile.

Once more she seemed to fancy that in saying this she was playing into the hands of Fate, for a frown appeared on his forehead. "Well, no, I think I would like you to see me home, Basil," she said. "We shall have a nice long talk in the train."

He nodded acquiescence; the affair was in her hands.

They walked from Wimbledon Station to her father's house—which was on the Ridgeway-at a brisk pace. Elsie took his arm, and he fancied she clung a little tightly, as if she suddenly felt the return of the But he found it easy to talk shadow.

cheerfully, because he was deeply interested

in what was to follow.

They parted, Elsie detaining him for a short time in talking over arrangements for to-morrow. She felt obviously nervous. Twice she held up her lips to be kissed.

"You are sure everything is quite all jolly, aren't you, old boy?" she asked.

"Rather! Good night, dear."

The door closed behind her as he reached the gate, and he set off down the hill to the station.

He was listening for the furtive step behind just as he had listened in his dream. Not yet—not just yet! It was not due for

several more yards.

If he had not dreamed that dream, he would not have listened for the step; he would not have paused, perhaps, and so the catastrophe might not have happened. It was a curious psychological puzzle, and it interested him so much that he forgot to listen. Perhaps a foreknowledge of trouble only hastens it; he would have liked to discuss the point with one or two men who were interested in such things.

Ah, now !

He heard the step. Someone was running for a few yards with a shuffling uncertain run, and then pausing. He looked round, but saw no one. The figure was hiding in the shadow. A few yards further on, he looked round again, and this time he saw someone.

"Don't hide yourself," he said. "If you have anything to say, come and say it."

They were the exact words of his dream. He had not consciously chosen them; they came from his lips naturally.

The man was standing in the light of the lamp. He was scared-looking and shabby, a person to be smiled at rather than feared.

"Who the devil are you?" asked Charteris.

The man came nearer.

"Perhaps you don't know me," he muttered. "Why don't you pretend you never saw me before?"

Charteris made some reply—possibly the words of his dream—but his mind was busy. If he was to avert his fate, he must be swift.

"Who wrecked my home?" said the

man hoarsely. "You . . ."

Charteris sprang forward, but the other was too quick. The revolver cracked off full in his face, as it seemed, and he fell.

"At last! Do you feel very weak, dear?"
Elsie was bending over him. He was
lying on a stretcher in a darkish place, and,
knowing that he would be perplexed, she

explained quickly.

Only a few minutes had passed since the shot was fired, and he was at the police-station, where he had been examined by a doctor. There was little harm done, for the madman's arm had been struck aside, at the very instant he fired, by Elsie herself, and the wound was a trifle.

"How did you come to be there, Elsie?"

he asked.

"I was frightened, old boy," she whispered. "And as we entered our gate, I saw a man lurking in the dark not far away. After you left me, I came out again and followed you."

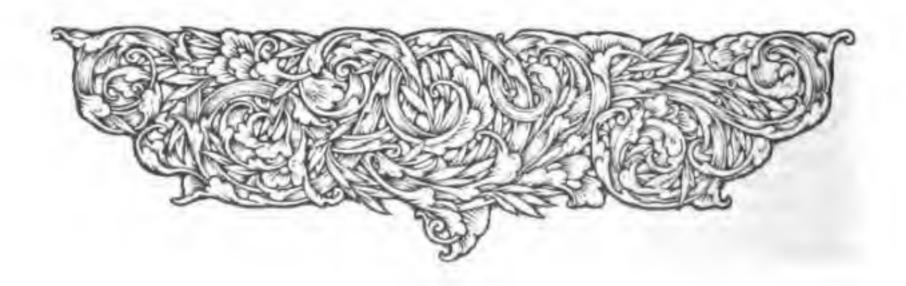
He held her hand and looked up into her

eyes gratefully.

"I am thankful to-day is finished," he said. "Are they going to take me to a hospital?"

"No jolly fear," she said. "I am going to have you under my own eye, and I've 'phoned to mother to say we are coming."

"If only my dream had told me that the day would end up like this, I wouldn't have cared twopence," he said. "But Fate itself cannot get level with a woman when she's the right sort."



# THE IMMORTAL GUINEA-PIG

## By RONALD MACDONALD

#### ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

BECKINGTON VILLAGE suspected Madely Towers, and vaguely feared the fine house with the splendid gardens and the grim wall enclosing them. "The Red Lion" faces the graceful stone bridge which crosses the Ifflet, and from Madely Towers into Beckington there is no way but the bridge, unless you walk two miles round.

So the landlord of "The Red Lion" saw almost everyone who came from or went to the old country house—turned ten years ago into a sanatorium—for the railway-station was on the same side of the Ifflet as the inn.

There was scarce an inmate of the Towers but would, in the course of a week, come walking over the bridge which crossed the deep-rushing little river. Now and again one would stop, order something, and drink it under the inquisition of five or six pairs of eyes. But in none of Dr. Anson's patients could "The Red Lion" find a hole to pick. The men drank little and talked pleasantly; and the younger of them, though they seldom stayed long at the Towers, always left it looking stronger and happier.

Of the women, except that they did not drink at "The Red Lion," the same things might be said; they left Dr. Anson's a little fatter, a little browner, and a great deal happier, if looks were to be trusted, than

when they came.

The older patients, however, stayed longer; some three or four, Odgers, the landlord, was ready to swear, had been there since Anson took the house. And it was the elder men and women who gave the inn and the village that sense of the unknown and the unaccountable which had ripened into suspicion.

That the young and jaded should in this mild yet stimulating air become younger, happier, and keener was all in the course of Nature; but that the decrepit, the fat, and

the senile should, in the course whether of a few months or fewer years, grow erect, lose grossness, and come alive again to the world around them, was—well, it savoured of witchcraft, the black art of which the tradition yet lingers in some parts of that

county.

Many in Beckington thought, and all Beckington had some perception of the notion as Beckington's united opinion, that Dr. Anson was up to no good, and was playing a queer game—working a spell or deviltry of some kind on the people who would have seemed, to you or me, to have

got nothing but healing from him.

Yet almost every man in Beckington who did not himself owe something to the wisdom and kindness of Dr. Anson, knew two or three others who did. But that lean figure, that brown face, those thin lips, the alert gait and the ready ear seemed, to the rustic mind, to consort ill with the "in-turned" expression of the eyes.

"However kind and clever he be," Sam Odgers would say, "it always seems like as if it was some other chap, not you, as he's

doing it for."

After heavy rain in the first week of August had come splendid summer weather. Odgers himself had brought out the ale which Tompkins, from Boulger's End Farm, was drinking.

Tompkins, lowering the pewter from his face, saw right in front of him, coming down the hill on the other side of the river, a little old lady. He pointed across the bridge

with the tankard.

"Who's she?" he asked.

"Looks like Mrs. Anson—doctor's mother, up to Madely," said Odgers. "She's too old to be running, let alone the heat."

" And never hat nor bonnet on her head ! "

exclaimed Tompkins.

The figure drew nearer, running with the pitiable, flat-footed trot of an old woman.

Tompkins dropped the pewter mug into the road, gathered the reins in a short grip, and snatched his whip from the socket on

the splashboard.

"She'll do herself a hurt," he said, and struck his horse, for the first time almost in his life galloping a dog-cart downhill. Something told him not to let the woman reach the bridge, and his very zeal undid him. The trotting figure and the galloping horse met near the far end of the bridge. He could see the face now—desperate, if not mad. To avoid crushing her against the wall with his near wheel, Tompkins drew out a little. The woman trotted by him, helping her pace with hands that scrambled like rats along the breast-high parapet.

He divined that she did not mean to cross the bridge, and it seemed to him an age before he succeeded in stopping and turning the cart, heading the horse back towards the inn. In reality, he had done it all in the shortest possible time, but, as he came abreast of her, the little old woman had her second knee on the parapet, and was struggling to her feet for the leap into the

water.

Tompkins jumped from his seat in time only to grasp a handful of her skirt as she went over. A jagged piece of black stuff in his hand was all he gained by it. A downward glance showed him some clothes and a grey head bobbing and twisting down

the quick water.

He ran back to the end of the bridge she had come from, vaulted the fence where it met the parapet, and ran along the grass bank till he had distanced the grey head, now almost submerged. He judged his time, flopped in, and swam. In spite of the stream he was strong enough to reach its middle as she came down to him, now under water. Somehow he got the poor, draggled head over his shoulder, and then, with only one arm at work, had all he could do to keep the two mouths free. Feebly but doggedly he was swimming for the Beckington bank, and wondering how long he would hold out if he could not break through the mid strength of the current, when he heard a shout, and next moment felt the slap of a line falling across his shoulders. He caught the rope with his free hand-Odgers was at its other end-and in a minute and a half Tompkins and his burden were ashore.

They carried the little woman up through

"The Red Lion" paddock to the inn, not knowing whether she were dead or slive.

Mrs. Odgers met them at the back door, screaming: she had seen death approaching, she thought, through the apple trees.

But "Shut thy mouth!" said Odgers; and when she saw the grey, draggled head between his arms, she was not only silent, but became again the efficient woman her husband knew.

They carried the helpless body to the landlady's room. Mrs. Odgers, knowing nothing of artificial respiration, began at once to strip the wizened little form, sending the men from the room as if modesty were more than life.

Odgers ran to the kitchen to fill bottles

with hot water.

Tompkins helped himself to spirits in the deserted bar, and remembered his horse and trap. As he went out into the road, he saw that a small crowd had already gathered, in the midst of which was Dr. Anson's motor-car, and the Doctor, asking what had happened.

He left the car, meeting Tompkins on the

steps.

"Upstairs," said Tompkins, pointing the way. And then, after a moment's hesitation, "They do say it's Mrs. Anson, sir," he added.

"Fetch the lady from my car," said

Anson, and leapt up the stairs.

A woman in a silk dust-coat was already getting out. She was of graceful figure, pale of face, with large brown eyes. The crowd watched her speak with Tompkins and then enter the house.

"Doctor herself," he heard one man say to another. "My sister's courtin' with the second gardener at the Towers. She've got letters after her name—same's a man. She's his assistant—not so much with the patients, gardener says, as in the other games."

"Games-what games?" asked Tomp-

kins.

"How sh'd I know? There's the rabbits in their hutches, and rats and guinea-pigs. Stinkin' vermin, all of 'em—but I pities 'em."

An hour later, when they brought old Mrs. Anson, wrapped in blankets, and with the draggled hair decently hidden, down to the car, Tompkins was again there. Having risked something in getting her out of the water, he had a modest curiosity to see that she lived. He was pleased by the tenderness of her son, and of the lady who was also a doctor, in securing her comfort. A little

flutter inside him rather hoped that somebody would say "Thank you." Yet he kept himself and his glass religiously aloof.

became awkwardness when Tompkins felt, in moving, the coat and trousers which neither belonged to nor fitted him.

Dr. Anson gave him his hand.

"My debt is too great for words, Mr. Tompkins," he said. "May I come and see you at Boulger's End?" Then he turned to the white face framed in blanket and silk handkerchief.

" Mother," he said, " this is Mr. Tompkins. He saved your

life at the risk of his own." The eyes in the pale face had been half closed. Now they came wide open and met those of the blushing Tompkins.

"I came to tell you how I felt-felt your delicacy, and how I think you have just that sympathetic spirit of a sportsman which my husband loved finding in a man."

Anson, on the point of starting, leaned over and seemed to ask a question of Sam Odgers. Answering, Odgers glanced at Tompkins and beckoned him. Modesty

In a voice very low, but so exquisitely clear that the words were heard by at least half a dozen of the villagers as well as by Sam Odgers and his wife, Mrs. Anson spoke. "I shall never forgive him," she said. And the delicate old face twitched as the

eyes closed.

No comment was possible. Anson started his car, nodding, with a deprecating smile, at Tompkins. The lady who was, they said, also a doctor, looked back also to nod and smile, and Tompkins thought the smile made her beautiful.

Beckington discovered as many explanations as it invented versions of the facts. Tompkins, who was not Beckington proper, said nothing. Of true Beckington men, Odgers said the least. But his office did once or twice force him to give an opinion; it seemed like as if the poor lady had been tired of being alive, and that was a thing as could happen easy enough, without no witchcraft nor foul play in it. Seemed a pity like, he said softly onceto the Reverend Mr. Merridew—that he and Tompkins had been looking over river when she came ambling down to the bridge. And Mr. Merridew, though nodding sympathetically, said something formal of bearing the burdens laid upon us. To which Sam Odgers replied that there might be burdens, so to speak, outside of the bargain. What bargain, Merridew did not ask. But Odgers continued, as if explanation were incumbent, whether asked or not:

"I've always looked at the whole thing, you see, sir, as a bargain 'tween me and summat that I—well, that I just has to guess at. And part of that bargain—way I look at it, you see, Mr. Merridew—part of

that bargain is-"

Odgers was shy. So was Merridew, but

he managed to nod encouragement.

"The days of our years are three-score years and ten—it says that somewheres, you know, Mr. Merridew," Odgers explained. "And summat more—saying, like, if you do happen to get the long pull, you'll mebbe find it a drop over what you needed."

"Well?" asked Merridew guardedly, but quickly suspicious of what the man meant

to convey.

Odgers looked him straight in the eyes for the first time that day. "Ever kept

guinea-pigs, parson?" he asked.

"When I was a little boy, but not for long. The little beasts were always dying. I had six once, and a thunderstorm killed three."

"Oldest I ever knew," said Odgers, with a certain grim significance, "was six years. I'm not saying you mightn't get one to live seven—p'r'aps even eight—but they've got a guinea-pig up to Madely Towers what'll be nineteen years come Christmas."

Mr. Merridew went home feeling rather sick. And Odgers, knowing his man, never asked him not to repeat what he had said.

Dr. Anson came, as he had promised, to see Tompkins. Though both were simpleminded men, and though each had the best manners of his class, there was constraint on both sides, to which Tompkins, at the end of the interview, gave partial expression

Modestly, even diffidently, Anson had taken from the car a beautifully-made, old-fashioned hunting-crop, asking the farmer to keep it in memory of his gratitude.

Tompkins demurring inarticulately—
"It was my father's," said Anson. "He was a great man after the hounds. He and my mother—well, such devotion as theirs seems to me a very rare thing, Mr. Tompkins. He has been dead ten years. I'd like you to take it as from him."

Poor Tompkins had a feeling "above himself." He turned flaming red in the face, and his hands were behind his back.

"Can't be done, Dr. Anson," he said. Then, seeing the pain and astonishment on the other man's face, he took the desperate venture of comforting him with the truth: "I'm thinking, if things were that way with him, your father, sir, would like enough have as little thanks for what I did as your mother had."

Anson was a gentleman, and accepted the honesty of the explanation, doing his best to hide the pain it gave him. He laid the whip on the seat of the car, assured the unhappy Tompkins of at least a son's gratitude, shook hands with him warmly, and drove away.

Three days later the car came again, but this time it brought Mrs. Anson herself.

Tompkins was there when she came, and her face wore an expression of contrition so gentle and appealing that he helped her out very tenderly.

He led her into his stiff and stuffy parlour

and put her into its best chair.

"You're a kind man, as well as a very brave one, Mr. Tompkins," she said. "I want you to forgive me—my ingratitude."

"If what I did seemed an injury, ma'am, rather than a good turn—" he began.

But she interrupted him.

"It was a good turn," she said. "Suicide is wicked. I've always been taught so, and believed it, so I seem to have no excuse."

"They do say 'tis the Lord knows the excuses," murmured Tompkins, much

embarrassed.

"I hope so," she answered simply. "My son told me, Mr. Tompkins, why you refused to accept from him a thing which he and I prize very much. The whip belonged to one of the most famous cross-country riders in the shires—Major James Anson, my husband."

Tompkins made the mouth of a man about to whistle in astonishment, but checked himself at the cost of a small hiss.

"'Tis a fine whip, and a fine man they say he was, ma'am. Did you do me the honour to come here to-day to make me take it?"

"No, I came to tell you how I felt—felt your delicacy, and how I think you have just that sympathetic spirit of a sportsman which my husband loved finding in a man."

Tompkins was struck to the heart with

pleasure, but did not speak.

"And also," she went on; in her clear, thin voice, with such beauty of pronunciation as Tompkins had not heard since the old Taverner family, driven out by the Death Duties, had parted with Madely Towers—"and also, Mr. Tompkins, I came because I wanted to tell you how it all happened."

"D'you think, ma'am, as that's wise? It's mostly best to let them things lie. I can see you're a good, kind lady, and I can believe in a heavy trouble without even trying to guess what it might be. It hasn't hurt me, ma'am, what you said, 'cept that I've been wishing whiles that I'd not

interfered. But--"

"But there's no time to ask questions, is there, when a crazy old woman is trying to take headers off a bridge? You'll have to listen to me, please So fill your pipe, Mr. Tompkins, and sit down—there."

She pointed to a chair facing hers, and Tompkins obeyed, even to taking his pipe out of his pocket. But after her first words

he forgot to fill it.

"My son, Dr. Philip Anson, earned high distinction at Cambridge," she said, "and afterwards in the hospital and the examinations in London. But his love for his father made him content with a country practice in our part of Leicestershire, so that they might see each other almost every day. But after my husband's death Philip chose this place, Madely Towers, as best suited for carrying out what he called his life's work. What that was I did not understand

at the time, and I was surprised when I found that this new place, so far from our old house, was just only a kind of sanatorium. I could not bring myself to leave the place where his father and I had been so happy together. For the first two or three years of my widowhood I was fairly content. Philip came often to see me, and, as my health seemed rapidly declining, I believed I should soon join his father. My friends used sometimes to speak of me as a saint. alluding to the resignation with which I endured my ailments. I used to laugh secretly over that, because every twinge of sciatica, every cold in the head, every attack of influenza, was counted as a step towards towards my husband, Mr. Tompkins. Only I wanted to see my son married first."

She paused a moment, as if asking whether

he understood.

Tompkins nodded gravely.

"Two years ago I nearly died of pneumonia. Philip came to me, nursed me, and brought me here. He told me he believed he could make me quite strong again, and I submitted to his treatment and to staying on here the more willingly that I didn't believe all the doctors in the world could keep me from dying very soon, and also because there was a lady in his house working with him, whom I liked very much,

and whom I hoped he would marry.

"Well, I saw a good many patients come and go, and I wasn't surprised when they got well in such clever hands. But some of the old ones stayed on and on, and seemed to grow, not only stronger, but younger. One day I questioned Miss Sylvia Clive-Dr. Clive, they call her-and she told me that there wasn't a man in the world who'd been so successful in averting and combating the first stages of senile decay as Dr. Anson. She is very sweet and kind, and, somehow. the phrase 'senile decay' didn't frighten me so much as if she'd said he knew how to keep people from growing old. But some little time after that I was talking to one of the patients—a Mr. Blyfield, a gentleman who has been there for six years. He's cighty years old next month."

"I've seen Mr. Blyfield," said Tompkins, and talked to him. I'd have given him

a bare sixty."

And he saw a slender shudder run over

the old woman's body.

"That that," she said very softly, " is the horror of it. An old man that isn't old enough can become as ghastly as a child that won't grow up. Well, I was talking to Mr. Blyfield, when he suddenly laughed in

a very queer way.

"'Ma'am,' he said, 'it's immortality he's after. Your son's jumped ahead of Metchnikoff as far as Stephenson outpaced Jamie Watt. We keep it quiet here, we old ones, because we want to play the game with Dr. Anson. Man's a long liver, anyhow, and takes a bit of observing. But I was an awful case of senile decay at seventy-four, ma'am. They had a man and two women to feed, wash, and brush me. A doll, ma'am, I was, with too little sawdust in my calico veins. Look at me now!' he said, and threw out his chest and waggled that dreadful white beard. Mr. Tompkins, so that he gave me an awful fit of shuddering.

"Then the old gentleman—for you must understand, Mr. Tompkins, that he is a gentleman in a sort of way; he is always gentle and considerate to me. I mustn't forget that, because my son and Miss Clive were always so busy in the annex—"

Here honest Tompkins interrupted to ask

what an annex might be.

"They call it the annex—the great wide shed where there are all sorts of rooms where all sorts of queer things are being done all day, and where all the nice young men look always so anxious," explained Mrs. Anson. "Miss Clive and my son were so much in the annex, and amongst the cages where all the strange animals are kept—"

"Animals? What animals?"

"Rats, rabbits, and guinea-pigs," replied the old lady, "one or two horses that don't work, and a few dogs."

Tompkins laughed as if relieved of

anxiety.

"But those are common animals enough,

ma'am," he said.

"They are strange ones—at Madely Towers, in the wire hutches and cages and stalls," persisted Mrs. Anson.

" Why ? "

"They don't die, Mr. Tompkins," she replied, and the pretty, gentle old face was full of horror. "This Mr. Blyfield was very kind and attentive, and I liked him till he started this subject. And I couldn't keep him off it, and it frightened me. At first I thought he was crazy, but I found there were one or two others who believed at least that their lives were being indefinitely prolonged. The Doctor didn't like it being talked about, they said, and had never professed more than to have gone further than any other physician in the successful

treatment of old age as a disease. Mr. Blyfield said that was certainly the philosophic way to regard it. There are many diseases, he said, and they all lead to death. Old age is just the commonest of them—that's all.

"I found I had no difficulty in avoiding this kind of talk with the others, but Mr. Blyfield became tiresome. So at last I told him that the subject didn't interest me. He became much excited, and said it ought to interest me very much, because I was one of them—had undergone the same treatment that he and the others had been through. This I denied, but when he described it as far as he had been permitted to understand it, I believed he was right. It made me very unhappy, Mr. Tompkins, to think that I might have to—to go on and on—"

Tompkins, his face full of sympathy,

nodded to show that he understood.

"Of course I didn't believe all that Mr. Blyfield hoped. That would have been too horrible. I asked Miss Clive to explain it all to me, but got so little out of her that at last I went to my son. We had never quarrelled before, Mr. Tompkins, and it was very dreadful."

Then she forgot that Farmer Tompkins was so far from being of her own people that he was not even of her class, and spoke to him as her intimate in a common humanity.

"I don't mean that he quarrelled; it was I that quarrelled with my son, because he had healed me, Mr. Tompkins—healed me so well that he couldn't even tell me when I was likely to die. I walked out of his study, out of the grounds into the road, miserable because I had hurt him, and miserable because Mr. Blyfield's horrid hope had become my worst fear. I went a little mad, I suppose, with the desire of death. I found myself running down the hill to the bridge, hoping to get into the cool water before I fainted.

"Then I saw an enemy in a chariot, galloping down the other hill towards me. I saw you pull your horse to save me from being crushed. I knew you'd come back after me, and I was determined to get over the edge before you could catch me. I did. And even now I can't think how you managed to get me alive out of that strong little river."

Tompkins told her how he and Odgers had accomplished the ungrateful rescue.

"That was very brave and clever of you both," she said. Her mouth smiled seriously

and her eyes shone, Tompkins thought, like

a girl's.

There followed a pause which did not make Tompkins uncomfortable. For this simple old lady had put him at peace with himself as well as with her.

At last she said :

"What am I to do, Mr. Tompkins?"

"Ma'am," he answered, "you've no right to take it into your own hands."

"But I must go away some day to Major

Anson-you do see that, don't you?"

"Seems to you that that was one of the rules of the game, when you began playing, don't it, ma'am?" he asked.

Mrs. Anson nodded her head like a bird

pecking.

"It's quite extraordinary, Mr. Tompkins," she said, "how well you understand."

"May I ask—without offence, ma'am—may I ask your age?"

"I am just seventy," she replied.

"Even cricket, ma'am," said Tompkins diffidently, "has a printed book of the rules. The Bible's been printed a long time. It don't say when you've a right to declare the innings closed—to be sure it don't. But it does say you may expect seventy overs, and that anything beyond that's a bit too much. And the language not being what you might call precise and lawyer-like, it leaves me, anyhow, ma'am, with a notion that, if the match was pulled out by some trick of stopping the sun and no night coming between, I'd say there was a most unsportsmanlike Joshua in league with a bad umpire, and, dash it, I'd draw the stumps!"

Apart from his ambiguous service of pulling her out of the Ifflet, Tompkins and Mrs. Anson had something in common: she had been the wife of a gentleman famous for his lofty interpretation of the rules of the game, and the farmer was captain of the cricket team which practised and sometimes even played a match in one of his own

fields.

"You mean, Mr. Tompkins, that when I find it running into the hundred and fifth year or so, I may say: 'Tisn't fair! Shan't play any more!'"

"That's what I mean, ma'am," said

Tompkins.

"Who's to fix the time?"

" It's between you and the Lord, ma'am,"

said Tompkins.

"What would you do," she asked, almost gaily, "if you caught me jumping into the liflet again? I'm afraid it wouldn't be

good for your high reputation just to stand

and look on, would it?"

"I think I should do the same as before." he answered. "I couldn't leave my job, you see, ma'am, to another chap. But I don't think I'd need to hold your head quite so high out of the water."

The little old lady laughed aloud and rose

from her chair.

"I'm so glad I came to see you," she said. "I wanted only your forgiveness, and you've given me your sympathy. I feel better for meeting a gentleman who quite understands. Will you please put me in the car?"

When she was seated, Tompkins, tucking the rug round her, saw the riding-crop which had belonged to the late Major Anson lying in the other corner. He picked it up.

"I should like to keep it, ma'am-if I

may?" he said.

"Oh, thank you!" she cried eagerly.

"Dr. Anson will be so glad when I tell him."

Then, just as the car was moving, she leaned towards him and said softly: "I'm going to be quite reasonable, thanks to you, Mr. Tompkins."

For seven years Anson and Merridew, the

parson, had been friends.

On the Saturday night after Tompkins had accepted the gift of the hunting-crop, Merridew had fallen asleep over the preparation of the next morning's sermon, and was jerked from a charming dream of fly-fishing in Heaven by a tapping on the glass of his study window. He opened it and let in Dr. Anson.

After one glance at his visitor's face, instead of asking what he came for, Merridew made much of him, pushing him down into the big chair, finding the box with three remaining cigars in it, and fetching whisky from the dining-room.

"I don't take it," said Anson, looking kindly at the tumbler which Merridew

offered him.

"You doctors," said the host, "think you know everything. If you want to talk to me, my good man, you'll swallow that. If there's a man in the world knows what another man ought to drink, and how much, I do. It's part of my job."

Having cut the last but two of his cigars, he almost put it in his guest's mouth, and

struck a match for him.

"I got those at a City dinner," he said.
"I have known them soften the pangs of confession."

Anson laughed softly.

"You've come to confess, haven't you?" asked Merridew.

"Something like it," admitted Anson,

scent of his boyhood. He swallowed a

mouthful from the tumbler.
"Good whisky," he said. "I came to talk to you, anyhow."



" You've been thinking so much of life that you've forgotten about living."

still smiling. He had lived with patients, women, and subordinate male assistants so long and so exclusively that to hear a man jest of drink and tobacco brought back a

"Why me?" asked Merridew.
"Because you're an outsider. I'm disposed to tell you things I can't at present speak of to another man of science, also

because I know you have a long head and a sound heart. I don't know whether you taken any interest in bacteriology."

Merridew glanced at his visitor whim-

sically.

"I read a little, in a slovenly kind of way,"

he said—" Metchnikoff, for instance."

"That'll make it easier for me. Even at Cambridge prolongation of life was my hobby. It became my passion in general practice. By the time I was free, and rich enough to make it the work of my life, I was already ahead of Metchnikoff. I've had him to use, but I never published word that could help him. But nine years ago, just after I came here, I seemed at a deadlock. Then suddenly the key was pushed into my hand by what they call chance. The discovery was really a by-product of the bacteriological research which never ceases in my laboratories."

"Was it a serum or an anti-toxin?"

asked Merridew.

"Neither. Just a modification, permanent and reproductive, you understand—a modified form of the bacillus coli. It has the extraordinary property, to put the matter in popular language of neutralising, in definite mathematical proportion, the work of the whole group of the bacteria of putrefaction."

"And so, I suppose, if introduced into the human system, of arresting the self-poisoning which Metchnikoff writes of—auto-intoxication, what ?—caused by the absorption into the blood of the products of putrefaction?"

Anson nodded. "That'll do," he said.

"Doesn't he say, too, that the phagocytes are over-stimulated by these same products until they prey upon the specific cells of the tissues?"

"H'm!" grunted Anson. "We'd better leave that. Amounts to a pious opinion."

"But your-your mutated bacillus?"

"Oh, I'm not going to tell you his history, nor how I got him." said Anson. "Not even the assistant who first put me on his track knows that I cared for him and used him. I alone—I and Miss Clive alone know the whole story. Nobody else on earth. She and I have to do the cultivation."

"Is the world ever to know?" asked

Merridew.

"That's what I've come here about," said Anson; "not to give you the description, name, and address of what you'd probably call my microbe, but to tell you a little of what has been accomplished by his means."

"Sam Odgers," said Merridew, "believes

you have a living guinea-pig born nineteen years ago. Old Blyfield has been heard to declare that he's going to live for ever."

"Blyfield's a fool. Too old when I took

him in hand. Listen."

And he told at length the story of his mother—the same story which Farmer Tompkins had heard from Mrs. Anson two

days before.

"She is happier now," he said in conclusion. "I have told her that I had no design of putting off death altogether. I just used the best means I had to save the life of the person dearest to me on earth. It's the first time, isn't it, parson, that it's been thought criminal to do that?"

"She has discontinued the treatment, I

suppose," said Merridew.

"Oh, yes. That is, I have promised never to apply it again. But I haven't data enough yet, Merridew, to say when I think it probable she will die. My bacillus seems, for a modification, to be extraordinarily hardy and consistent. It persists in reproduction."

"You mean, don't you," said Merridew modestly, "that, the supply of immigrants being cut off, you haven't yet history enough to foretell when the early-settler stock will

die out ? "

"Something like that," said Anson. "So that's where I am with my dear little mother. And that brings me to my own personal difficulty. Miss Clive and I are—attached."

"The ascetic in love!" murmured the parson. Anson's face flushed so that it

seemed as if he had spoken.

"Well, my dear man," said Merridew, excusing himself, "you are ascetic, and with better excuse than many a saint. You deny yourself for an idea—for a work to be done. You forget yourself too long, instead of remembering yourself too much and too often. And it isn't only yourself, Anson, that you've been forgetting. That charming Miss Clive is a woman. Women hate waste—particularly waste of time. You've been thinking so much of life that you've forgotten about living. Well?"

"We had agreed," continued Anson awkwardly, "to marry after we had subjected ourselves to the treatment. Having begun this series of experiments in a philosophic spirit—what the newspapers call the cientific spirit—and not at all in the philanthropic nor in the sociological frame of mind, it seemed our duty to prolong our own lives as far as possible, in order to get the greater opportunity of observing and

recording the facts. Now, my few years' work on many animals and a small number of human beings has led me to assume empirically that the best time to start the treatment would be the moment, could one find it, when the human organism begins, as they say, to go down hill, or just before. For each of us—Miss Clive and me—I believe that time has arrived. Neither of

us wishes to give up a great idea, but there

are-well, hesitations.

"If my work has been worth while, I ought to give myself the chance of observing my method tried upon infancy, upon manhood, and upon the eve of senility. Results on the lower animals begin to show, and, before our 'seventy years and odd' were run, would give us some good records. But with man there's a thing-something that seems more in your line, though I've always ruled your craft out of my business -with man, something rushes in from outside and queers things. My bacilluswhat you called my mutated bacillus—has worked splendidly in the physiological area on four—no, five human subjects, although only exhibited after the definite inception of senility. Psychologically, however, things with those five are in a muddle. My mother's case you know. Her body is actually younger already, and that very thing drove her to doing what she did. Blyfield—well, I couldn't certify him deranged, but I'm afraid he's got a bee in his bonnet. I believe he thinks seas couldn't drown, rocks couldn't crush, nor bullets drill mortal holes in him. The other three men will soon, I think, get just tired. You know your Gulliver?

"Rather," said Merridew.

"Well, those three old fellows are all right now, but when I imagine another thirty years added to their score, I think of the Struldbrugs in the country of Luggnag."

" Naturally," said Merridew.

"I'm divided between a feeling that I ought to go on and a great distaste. I daren't hand over this knowledge undigested to the world, and I can't gather enough data to get at the whole practical truth of it, unless I live to be at least a hundred and thirty years old with undiminished faculties. Miss Clive consents to whatever course I may choose. Perhaps we ought to go on; but my mother has given me an old-fashioned remorse, Blyfield makes me angry, though his folly is, no doubt, my fault, and the other three begin to make me sick. Tell me which to do: follow out my plans for

me and Sylvia in our prime, you know, or

drop the whole thing."

"Drop it," said Merridew. "Hide it. Destroy your cultures and your records, Anson, and get married next week. There's a renewing of life that's greater than the prolongation your brilliant head has invented. If you live long enough to do your best for your children, you've done everything. It's a thing I've never seen done yet."

" What?"

"The best for the new ones."

Anson sat silent, nursing the last quarter

of his cigar.

"Protoplasm," he murmured at last, " is potentially immortal. It's only in these communities of particles of protoplasm which we call organisms that death seems to reign. There's no reason why man need die," he said, his problem turning round on him just when he would have been rid of it.

"Go and live, then," said the parson.

Merridew preached next morning in Beckington Church—rather well, he thought —on the Resurrection.

He wished Anson had been there to hear him. Towards the end of the sermon he caught sight of Miss Clive and little Mrs. Anson; at the back of the nave he could just distinguish the round face of Sam Odgers.

He was quicker than usual in removing his surplice. He wanted to speak with Odgers, whose church-going was infrequent.

Merridew liked his people to stand about and gossip after church. But there were ways and ways of doing this, as of all other things. To-day, as he hurried round to the west door of the church, and before he could see the little crowd between porch and lych-gate, he became aware of an excitement dominated by a loud voice quite out of tune with the usual decorous murmur.

Turning the corner, he saw a forest of

heads bent backwards.

The clamant voice came from above.

It came from a man perched in an angle of the church roof—an old man with red cheeks and a flowing white beard, which wagged foolishly as he shouted to the crowd below. It was Blyfield, Anson's patient.

"How did I get here?" he was asking rhetorically, as if the question had been asked. "That's what you'd like to know, isn't it? The means is no matter. Why am I here? Because I am above you all. You little church mice have to crawl inside

for your faint, superstitious hunting after immortality. I am here on the roof, because I am immortal already."

Someone cried clearly from the crowd:

"Come down, old man!"

And just then Dr. Anson, coming through the lych-gate, began to make his way through the press round the porch and among the tombstones.

He found himself stopped shoulder to shoulder with Odgers of "The Red Lion."

"You look up to Him you've never seen to make you live for ever. I look down now," roared the madman, "on him that has given me the life eternal!"

And he pointed a definite finger at Anson.

"Yours that you don't know you think greater than yourselves—without beginning and without end. Mine had a beginning, he will have an end. For he has given me the immortality he will not share with me. I cannot die! I live and live! Admire me—look on me—praise me!"

Then the stupefied villagers heard Anson's

voice.

"Mr. Blyfield," it said, "come down!"

"How?" asked the pink cheeks and silly beard, wagging furiously.

" As you went up."

"I flew. I am one of the immortals!"

"Don't fly down, old man," said a kindly humorist. "You'd maybe hurt yourself."

"Go down by the stair of the tower," called Anson, his voice like a slow bell.

"Stair! Tower! Hurt myself! See my immortality! I come to you, friends!"

And the crowd, holding its breath, saw him creep down to the gutter for a foothold. Under the confused roar of remonstrance, Anson heard in his ear: "Old fool!"

"Curse me, not him, Mr. Odgers," he

answered.

Then Blyfield cried, "I cannot die!"

and leapt.

For a horrid moment he twirled in the air, then fell, breaking his back very decently across the gravestone which seemed to have crept too familiarly close to the church.

When Merridew had dispersed the crowd, and the decent dispositions had been made, Odgers, perhaps not by accident, was once more at Anson's elbow. They were on the bridge, peering down in o the stiff, steady eddies. Afterwards Anson remembered the

place; it proved that Odgers had gone by his own house.

"Don't take it hard, sir," said the

publican.

"I played with things I didn't under-

stand," said Anson.

"Gosh, sir, I once made a fool drunk a fool that put me on edge, like. I wanted to see what'd happen."

"What did happen?" asked the other

dully.

"He weren't no worse, sir, and I don't know," said Sam, "as he wasn't a bit wiser."

"Where's the comparison?" asked Anson,

wretched and irritable.

"Oh, well, sir," said Odgers softly, "Mr. Blyfield set great store by his immortalness, didn't he? Seems to me like as if he'd taken by accident a sort of short cut to it. Alive, he were pretty dead. But now—well, did you hear Mr. Merridew's sermon, sir?"

Anson shook his head.

"Better ask the parson. He did put it loosid."

Before they parted, Anson shook hands

with the innkeeper.

"And look here, sir," said Odgers, before his grasp relaxed, "do you kill that gashly guinea-pig. It gets on my nerves to know it's in the county."

A fortnight later Madely Towers was to let.

A week after that Dr. Philip Anson married Miss Sylvia Clive. They took old Mrs. Anson abroad with them.

Three years later Merridew rode his old cob up to Tompkins, watching the reaping of his most forward field.

"I've had news," said the priest.

Tompkins nodded and said "Ay!"

expectantly.

"Old Mrs. Anson," said Merridew. "Her little grandson fell into a pond. She waded in, and must have had just strength enough to heave him out on the bank, and then fainted back into the water. Anyhow, they found her drowned, and the wet baby howling on the grass."

Tompkins smiled. He wanted to laugh. "She was a sweet old lady," he said slowly. "I'm glad she carried her bat

out."